ISSUE 35 • $1.75

MEDIASCENE

THIS ISSUE:

PREVIEW OF THE SCIENCE FICTION SHOCKER OF THE YEAR

ALIEN

THE SYNDICATED STAR WARS
SHOGUN WARRIORS/WEIRDWORLD
THE BROTHERS HILDEBRANDT/COMICS/MORE

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A SUPERGRAPHICS PUBLICATION

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issue 35
january-february 1979
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MEDIASCENE is a bi-monthly publication devoted to popular culture in multimedia, from the comics to the cinema.
SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
Single issue $1.75, year $9.00
Published by Supergraphics
Box 48/Reading, Pa 19603
copyright © 1978 James Steranko
All rights reserved
Second class postage
paid at Reading, Pa.
MEDIASCENE (USPS 047-060)

mediascene

Several weekends ago, I found myself at a convention in Boston, substituting for Walter (Maxwell Grant) Gibson who had a minor illness which prevented him from attending. Pennsylvania weather was a torrid fifteen degrees by comparison with Boston's sub-zero chlorate—and the wind-chill factor made it a record low of minus forty. Anyone that ventured outside, deserved it.

The action, of course, was inside where a small but courageous crowd found themselves being entertained by a host of diverting activities in spite of the frigid weather. One of those activities took the form of an open discussion between the attending audience, artist Mike Kaluta and myself. The lively exchange, which lasted several hours, drifted, at one point, onto a topic about which I had been speaking to gatherings of this type for the past few years. For want of a better term, let's call that topic *limited perception*.

I have always had a profound interest in things visual. Most people do, including the whole of comic fandom. But the aspect that I first found curious, then annoying, and finally depressing, was that those who have become totally immersed in cult interests, such as comics or science fiction, cannot see beyond their particular interest.

Ordinarily, this was none of my business, but, when I decided to take on the role of educator (with the writing of the first volume of **The History of Comics**), my attitude changed. Having a lifelong interest in art, films and music, I was surprised at how little overlap really existed amongst those who embraced those avocations, especially considering how often the forms themselves depended upon each other.

Just as collectors delight in sharing their treasures with anyone who'll take the time to be interested, so too was I interested in sharing the repository of my knowledge with others. To a degree, **MEDIASCENE** has functioned to fulfill that purpose. Still, there is so much yet to be tapped, that it is difficult even to know where to begin.

The real starting point, of course, must be the opening of the door that causes the draft that fans the flame of the imagination and the will to learn. Learning can often be a painful process, but when it comes to learning about the arts, that process can best be described by the word pleasurable.

And that's what makes me wonder why there's so much resistance to looking just beyond the obvious.

Those I know who explore a wide range of interests generally will go far out of their way to pursue a particular subject that has somehow eluded their searching eye—and will remain unsatisfied until it is found, studied and enjoyed.

I'm not talking about cumbersome homework or passionless study, but simple observation, acceptance and intelligent investigation. The rewards will materialize immediately in immeasurable amounts of enjoyment and enlightenment.

Let's take, for instance, the current trend of fantasy art, or even more to the point, the sword and sorcery genre. Publishers have made a concentrated effort over the past few years to find the right kind of material that would satisfy collectors in the contemporary marketplace. The most obvious solution, of course, was to be found among a small group of contemporary artists—and in the work they had produced for a handful of action-adventure pulp tales reprinted in paperback form.

Frank Frazetta was the forerunner and primary exponent of this trend, based on his work for the Ace Tarzan series and Lancer's Conan books. His work embodied enormous energy and emotion, the real qualities in his paintings which the public found seductive. These are the aspects by which Frazetta, the artist communicates with his audience, and are certainly the most important to his art. Sadly, many Frazetta cultists overlook these fundamental qualities to attribute him with more external ones, such as his use of color—or the very subject matter itself.

To do so would be a gross injustice, not only to Frazetta, but to those who inspired and instructed him. My fact is not to tell fans why they shouldn't enjoy an artist's work, but to strip away the restriction of *limited perception* so that they may enjoy the work for what it really is—and give it the real credit that it is due. All that's required in this case is to go back a generation or so to the paintings of N. C. Wyeth, who developed many of the color contributions currently used by Frazetta. In the more than twenty-five books that Wyeth illustrated for Scribner's in the first half of the century, the adventure theme was always predominant, and the volumes themselves bristled with vibrant and violent men of action—swordsmen, soldiers, knights, pirates and barbarians. Wyeth's influence on Frazetta goes even beyond the color and subject matter to the positioning of figures, compositions and the manner of detail.

By limiting one's perception of things outside a particular interest, entire worlds are lost. Unfortunately, too many Frazetta fans will never experience the joy of knowing the Wyeth paintings, especially now that they are so ultimately available in reprints of the original Scribner's editions, in books devoted exclusively to Wyeth, and in galleries and museums. Several years ago I visited the Brandywine River Museum to view a Wyeth show that featured one hundred and twenty originals, many that were as big as house doors. Beyond the sheer excitement of the battle scenes, the turmoil of the natural elements, the sense of atmospheric quality and uncanny storytelling ability, there was also a genuinely touching historic significance to the show that I have never witnessed before or since.

But one can go back even further, to Wyeth's influences, the most direct of which was Howard Pyle. Though Pyle lived and painted a century ago, his work is timeless, and many of his books—such as **King Arthur and his Knights** and **The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood**—are always in print.

Boris Vallejo is another name that comes to mind. His technique is inspired by the work of Frazetta and James Bama, who is best known to fans for his Doc Savage paperback paintings. Bama, in turn, was influenced by **Saturday Evening Post** cover painter Norman Rockwell, an artist who had so much to offer that today's draftsmen should be compelled to study his work before they graduate into the working world of commercial art. Boris. Bama. Rockwell. Three great individualists whose work is made all the more understandable and enjoyable when viewed collectively with *unlimited perception* in the mind's eye.

Those who find Barry Windsor-Smith's art of the last few years appealing, should do themselves a favor by investigating the pre-Raphaelite movement that emerged in England in the second half of the previous century. The work of Dante Rossetti, John Waterhouse, Edward Burne-Jones and John Everett Millais are powerful influences on Barry's style and approach.

Even considering the brilliant work being created in the heroic fantasy field today, it is doubtful that any contemporary artist could compete with the old European masters. They painted scenes that truly stagger the senses. If barbarian spectacle interests you, try Karl von Piloty, Jean-Leon Gerome and Henryk Siemiradzki. For a touch of sword and sorcery try August von Heyden and Jean Ingres. Like a bit of design with your fantasy, Gustav Klimt. Atmospheres and backgrounds, Arnold Bocklin. Erotic fantasy, Franz von Stuck. Interested in lines, Gustav Dore.

Granted these names will be unfamiliar; that's why I'm telling you about them.

Is their work difficult to find? Not at all. It's been preserved in museums all over the world. And if your local museum doesn't pay off, your library will. Art books are packed with this kind of material. But don't stop there, expand your vision to films, photos, graphics, whatever might fill the eye, educate the mind and delight the heart.

Telling you about it just won't be enough.

See for yourself, then show a friend. ●

STERANKO

MEDIA MAIL

Send your comments, complaints and criticisms to: MEDIAMAIL BOX 48/READING, PA. 19603.

MORE BREAKING INTO COMICS

I'd like to see more of your *How to Draw for Comics* series, especially some insights on panel layout and arrangement and composing camera shots. Also, more interviews with artists. How about a follow-up on your earlier Barry Smith article? I'm eagerly awaiting the Craig Russell interview. Craig's art is stunning and it's about time someone interviewed him.

I do feel that one of the strong points of **MEDIASCENE** is its art content. I mean, where else could one find examples of Barry Smith's Robin Hood, Jack Kirby's Prisoner, Paul Gulacy's rendering of Elric, or Steranko's presentation piece for The Shadow? So please keep up or even increase the art content.

William R. Abbott
Abilene TX

We have Craig scheduled for an interview in an upcoming issue that will tie in with a preview of his new book. As for Smith [he's had his name legally changed to Windsor-Smith], we've been considering running a dialogue with him and your editor for quite a while. Maybe the time to publish such a feature would be with the release of The Studio, a book spotlighting the careers of Windsor-Smith, Jones, Wrightson and Kaluta.

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

At year's end I take Underwood in hand to thank you for the **MEDIASCENE** which I thoroughly enjoy. Especial compliments on your series, *Breaking into Comics*. If they pay attention, beginners can be helped a great deal. And even veteran artists, writers, and (gulp!) editors could learn something. It's the best feature of its kind I have ever seen.

Of course I marvel at your other accomplishments—the Hamlet feats, the books, the illustrations, etc. You do such a tremendous amount of high quality work that, even just thinking about it, I have to lie down for three days.

Rod Reed
Pine Bush NY

That sounds like an exercise to us, Rod, but thanks for the kind words. [In case you've forgotten your comic history, Rod Reed reigned as editor over the Fawcett comic line during the [illegible] later wrote some of the best—and certainly many of the funniest!—scripts for Captain Marvel.]

SAMPLING ART

Regarding your series on prospects for working in the comic book field, I think it should be continued, but only on a semi-regular basis. One item I would especially like to see is reprints of pages of art by artists such as Walt Simonson, Howard Chaykin, Barry Smith, Dave Cockrum and John Byrne that were used as part of their portfolios in getting work at Charlton, DC and Marvel. I think this would be as instructive as the unsuccessful portfolio which was used to show mistakes made on first submissions. I also think something about SF paperback artists working out of the New York City area would be helpful.

David Vineyard
Big Spring TX

Most of the artists you mention did their apprenticeship in fanzines, just as did Kaluta, Jones and Wrightson. Much of their work is currently available today in reprint volumes, and it is doubtful that they would consent to having their work criticized publicly in these pages. However, just a few days ago, Bill Kane agreed to let us publish a series of his fan-zarts—and because Kane is one of the best storytellers in the business, we can concentrate on "how to," instead of how not to."

[illegible]

Basically what I wish to discuss is comic book writing, something which seems to be forever overshadowed by comic artwork, almost as though it were some secondary, insignificant excess rather than an essential ingredient to having a good comic. For me, the finest artwork in the world does not compensate for a bad script (and vice-versa) but rather only makes it look worse. Here's the point: there are various places the budding comic artist can find information about getting into his or her chosen field, much as your own piece in **MEDIASCENE** 32, but the most I have ever been able to dig up on writing comics is the following comment from Marvel's Helen Katz: "There are courses that can be taken on comic writing though I don't know where they are offered." So where will the new Stan Lees and Roy Thomases come from?

By now you have undoubtedly guessed that I fancy myself a potential comic writer. I may be merely an egotist, but all too often I read a new Marvel or DC book and find myself feeling I could do better, or at least as good (especially when I realize I've read the same story three times before in the same book!). There are several things unique to comic writing which appeal to me; there are fewer people involved with the actual story than there would be in, say, movies, and thus I think a comic story remains truer to the writers' original intention than in films or TV. Comics, much like plays, rely primarily upon dialogue and the positioning of scenes and characters (by the artist) to tell the story, and comic captions, when properly employed, can enhance a well-drawn panel much more than any voice over narration can help a film.

The heart of all this is that, as a college student considering several careers, I would like your *Breaking into Comics* feature to not only concentrate upon artwork but upon what goes into writing comics as well. It's possible you plan to do this already, in which case I suppose this letter is pretty stupid; however, if you did not plan to do this, I hope you'll consider the idea.

Wayne R. Smith
Lash Haven PA

Consider it considered! The original concept for the Breaking Into Comics series was indeed aimed primarily at artists, not writers, in the pure academic sense. Comic scripters, however, write for artists and sheets! [By the very nature of the form] to equally skilled as graphic storytellers—and storytelling is the one thing we've placed a real emphasis on. As a budding writer, you should tend to reevaluate what was essentially written for the fun artist, and extrapolate it into your own needs.

As for elements such as plotting, characterization and dialogue, those are basically the same for all types of narrative drama, from plays to novels to films. It is not necessarily a subject that should be taught in these pages—but, if reader response is strong enough, we'll be delighted to do a complete chapter that covers all the factors in producing a good comic script, including those mentioned above.

A MEDIASCENE HOLIDAY

I just loved **MEDIASCENE** 33 for the second part of the *How to Draw Comics* article and the feature on Flash Gordon. Another exclusive from **MEDIASCENE**. *The Ratholes on Park Avenue* sounds just insane enough to be true. When **MEDIASCENE** 33 arrived in my mail slot I must say I was flabbergasted! Of all things for the holidays! A portfolio issue! When you people put out issues like these it's impossible to find anything in **MEDIASCENE**'s format that I dislike! I guess I am just on the same wavelength. Reading the problems Jim stated that he has had made me wish that there was more that I could do the help **MEDIASCENE** is a matter of support.

Gordon Scott Manley
Portsmouth VA

*As one of our oldest Supergraphics customers and **MEDIASCENE** subscribers, your support, and that of others like you, has been the single most important factor in keeping this magazine alive and flourishing over the past seven years. It was created for people with special interests like your and as long as these interests continue, so will the publication of this magazine.*

The Ratholes on Park Avenue *was indeed true. Writer/artist Dan Reschke lived through all of it as the following letter will prove.*

BUILD-UP VS. LET-DOWN

Unfortunately, a lot of the work in issue 33 was very disappointing to me in that it was technique-heavy instead of conceptually satisfying. How many barbarian poses can there be anyway? Personally, if something like this has to be done, I'd like to see unusual interpretations of obscure comic book characters with great [illegible] for multiple, nobody ever does versions of The Fly, one of my all-time favorites. I could see about twenty completely different interpretations of The Fly more interesting than another swordfight scene. But that's where I'm at.

The current **MEDIASCENE** brings up a few things I'd like to comment on. I love films like **Metzer** and **Buck Rogers** as much as anyone else, but all too often I get the feeling that I enjoyed the **MEDIASCENE** spreads on them more than the films themselves—remember **Doc Savage, Space:1999** and **Battlestar Galactica**? Maybe I'm in the minority on this, but **Superman**, in my opinion, didn't live up to the **MEDIASCENE** spreads on it either. I really wanted to like that film as I've been a Superman fanatic all my life. Do you know that when I was a kid I actually had my mother make me up a little Superman costume that I would change into behind the bushes, and I'd run all around in my flabby honesty, playing Superman. I also played Batman, except my friend Mario would get mad at me, because I delegated him to being Robin all the time.

It didn't take me until about halfway into **Superman** to realize that it was just a lot of mega-budget crap, below the quality of even 1982 Wayne Boring material. (I would have loved to have seen this film patterned after Wayne Boring's Superman strips, in much the same way the Flash Gordon serial was patterned after Alex Raymond's stylization). But most of all, I realize that the people who made this film did not have any respect for the Superman character other than interpreting it for the type of audience who doesn't read comic books—and, after all, they are the ones who will make the Sakinda rich on this, not the comic fans. This film makes Superman accessible to the masses, like the television Hulk makes that character accessible to non-comics fans.

Dan Reschke
Mamaroneck NY

*We've inclined to agree with you, Dan. There have been instances where the feature in **MEDIASCENE** was more entertaining than the actual show. Because we preview material months, sometimes years in advance, we are not always able to see the finished product. Instead we must base our judgement on the people producing the work, their previous track record, advance production notes, art and photos and personal interviews. But, we'll never feature anything that we didn't feel had any value for our readership. We win some and we lose some, but I think you'll agree that we get it right more than get it wrong—and generally, we get it first.*

MORE PULP—LESS COMICS

I, personally, am sorry you are retiring from commercial work—the Jove Shadow paperbacks will not be the same without your work gracing the covers. But, then, perhaps you know something I have not yet heard about. As you can guess, I became a **MEDIASCENE** subscriber mainly on the impact 14 made on me. I bought it at a con in LA and was willing to subscribe just for the crumbs you published on the pulp heroes. Maybe, though you can now arrange things so more articles and items on the pulp heroes will appear.

My one dissatisfaction with **MEDIASCENE** is the vast overemphasis on comics-related material, since I have never been a comic fan (other than the strips in the daily newspaper.) But then, I realize I am in the minority on this, I suppose, and so I put up with the stuff just so I can get (what is to me) the good stuff.

Joseph Lewandowski
Capistrano CA

*The Jove Shadow series is over, Joe, but should the series be picked up by another publisher, more Bleeding covers could be forthcoming. We've never felt there was a real overemphasis on comics material in **MEDIASCENE**, but rather an equitable balance between all forms of fantasy and adventure entertainment.*

Just to reassure you, however, there will be some great pulp fare in your future. We have the definitive interview with Walter Gibson, The Shadow's creator, coming up soon, a detective fiction special, a pulp girls pictorial and a host of other goodies. We just hope you don't get a case of pulp burp before all of it appears.

RETIREMENT BLUES

I'm somewhat surprised to read that you're giving up commercial work to devote your time to **MEDIASCENE**-type endeavors exclusively. In this day and age such decisions are a novelty, and a rarity. Although as I am a comic fan, and relish the chance to see more from you, I just find it hard to believe.

Greg Myers
Elida OH

Don't despair, Greg. If plans work out, there will be more Sarendre art on the scene than there has been in the past ten years. But whether it will come in the form of paintings, illustrations for portfolios or comic narrative stories remains to be seen. There are a few projects to be completed first. What follows depends on what fans want to see most.

If Alfred Hitchcock were to make a suspense-thriller about the future, the result might well be more than a little like **Alien**.

As one of 1979's most anxiously awaited films, **Alien** combines the elements of suspense and shock-thrills in a science fiction motif with galactic settings and miraculous (but authentic) technological starships and accompanying hardware. Add lashings of horror, death and disaster, and mix in seven very different people working within the claustrophobic confines of a workaday factory spacecraft, and you have the ingredients of a unique motion picture. And all that is not even to mention some of the most remarkable special effects yet seen on film.

Alien is elemental in its concept, but staggering in its realization. It is a film that can be described only partially, since to tell all would be telling too much. It is a tension-filled shocker about seven astronauts —five men and two women— working on a battered commercial starship far away in space and time, who encounter an awesome galactic horror, and of their desperate attempts to combat it.

Suffice it to say that **Alien** is a story and a motion picture that you could never imagine in your wildest dreams. Or nightmares.

Presented by Twentieth Century-Fox, the same company that struck gold with **Star Wars**, **Alien** is a breakthrough level science-fiction film of chilling terror, starring Tom Skerritt, Sigourney Weaver, Veronica Cartwright, Harry Dean Stanton, John Hurt, Ian Holm and Yaphet Kotto.

Dan O'Bannon, the writer of both the original story and the screenplay described the basic concept behind **Alien** for **MEDIASCENE**: "**Close Encounters** was about contact between human beings and nice aliens. This is about contact between human beings and aliens that are not nice. As a matter of fact, they're downright disgusting. They're semi-humanoid, but quite unusual. They look more bizarre than you can imagine, than anyone can imagine, except for Giger, the artist who designed and built the one for our film."

Much of **Alien's** power comes from the imagery of the eternal loneliness and isolation evoked by deep-space. In fact, the film begins with a foreboding air of desolation as the factory-ship Nostromo rockets silently through the trackless cosmic void. The ship's controls are guided by a programmed computer, the entire crew is in hyper-sleep for their long-distance journey.

Then, in the middle of nowhere, at a place which should contain nothing, a distress signal sounds, alerting the crew and automatically halting the ship's trajectory through the galaxy. The emergency call which perhaps has sounded for a thousand years is being broadcast from a large asteroid upon which appears to

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AMONG THE STARS THEY FOUND COSMIC TERROR

ALIEN AWAKENED

PART ONE: THE ACTION AND THE ACTORS

...e the ruins of an incredibly ancient space colony.

Disembarking, they find a massive derelict spaceship crashed on the asteroid's foreboding surface. Exploring the bizarre hull, the crew discovers the skeletal remains of a ten-foot ...an wearing what looks like a ...ace-jockey," ...ong dead at the console of an immensely powerful cannon, his claw-like appendages still frozen on the firing grips. Exactly what killed the gunner and what he was trying to destroy remains a mystery, but the solitude of the silent ruins is shrouded by an ...erie evil presence.

The first quarter of the film takes place on the deadly asteroid where the groundwork is laid for the terror to come. And little by little it does, as the *Nostromo* continues its journey homeward. The seven crew members gradually realize that they are not alone.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, the alien is among them, taking a terrible toll in an environment on which there is no place to escape. The crew, and the audience, never know when the alien in their midst will strike, but when it does, the impact is as jolting to the senses as the blow of a sledgehammer.

Directed by Ridley Scott, **Alien** is a paranoid's delight of skin-crawling assaults on the rational mind. Scott has approached the project with a stylish technique that combines classic horror and the impressionistic look of the great 40's thrillers. Unlike those, however, **Alien** is shot in color, with an emphasis on dramatic lighting and hard-edged contrasts that enhance the claustrophobic set designs.

A pervasive air of menace lurking around every corner is maintained, and the story itself is laden with *noir* traits of overwhelming odds, emotional and physical isolation, and a hard-bitten portrayal of violence as a necessary element for survival.

Alien sustains itself primarily through the building of suspense, and is admittedly striving for comparison in film territory pioneered by Lang, Siodmak and Hitchcock. Unlike most Hitchcock films, however, **Alien** does not foreshadow its shocks by letting the audience in on upcoming danger in advance. It is more in the vein of **Psycho** and **Jaws** - in that the alien strikes without warning of any kind, jolting the viewer with the unexpectedness of its appearance and ferocity.

Part of this impact is achieved by the fact that nobody in the film or the audience will know exactly what the alien looks like at any given time. It constantly changes and evolves throughout the film.

And, while there are clues given concerning the alien's actions and characteristics, the film's point of view is mostly subjective to the crew, so that the information comes in small segments which must be put

together to make sense—and, putting it all together during the film will be taxing to even the most seasoned viewer.

Though the basic plot bears a fundamental resemblance to **The Thing** and **It, The Terror from Beyond Space**, the handling and construction of **Alien** elevates it to an entirely different level. There are five major shock sequences, each shatteringly unexpected, and always opening the door to even greater terror.

Every scene and action of **Alien** was meticulously choreographed through the extensive use of storyboards, which Scott followed scrupulously during shooting. Coordinating the actors with the post-production special effects required a thorough knowledge of every movement before and after the actors' filming was undertaken.

As an example of the level of perfection sought for **Alien**, Scott held extensive rehearsals with his seven actors several weeks before filming was scheduled to begin. Yaphet Kotto commented on this: "**Alien** was only the second film I've ever worked on that held preparatory rehearsals. Lines were rewritten and characterizations tightened-up so that we functioned like a crew that has been traveling together in space for a long, long time."

In addition, the actors were assigned NASA literature to study so that they could familiarize themselves with the technical slang and equipment functions. Every character was also given a complete background of previous jobs, homelife and childhood to embellish the depth and motivations of their actions. As a consequence, **Alien** is as much an actors' showcase as it is a director's playground and special-effects setpiece, perhaps the first of its kind ever attempted.

On the whole, **Alien** stands as a *tour-de-force* effort by Ridley Scott. He not only executed the painstaking direction of **Alien**, but also served as his own cameraman, capturing each shot in the view-finder to suit his demands. Such precise attention to photographic detail has been indigenous to Scott's work in over three thousand British and American TV commercials, and in his award-winning feature debut, **The Duellists**, in 1977. Interested in all aspects of the film, he was also on hand for many of the special effects sequences, and supervised the final editing of **Alien**, so that the two hours seen on the screen will bear his personal stamp. This also allowed him to make last minute decisions and cuts which would help clarify the continuity while heightening the taut suspense construction. The entire process was so exhilarating that Scott hopes to line up another fantasy project which will allow him to explore various ideas and possibilities stimulated by **Alien**'s extensive special effects work.

The original concept and story for **Alien** is a collaborative effort between Executive Producer Ronald Shusett and Dan O'Bannon, who as the writer/director/editor/special-effects creator/star of the sci-fi comedy **Dark Star**, special effects consultant for **Star Wars**, and pre-production advisor for the abandoned **Dune** film. When **MEDIASCENE** asked O'Bannon to recall the events leading up to **Alien**, he recalled its genesis vividly:

"When **Dune** fell through I came back from Paris broke, and only survived by living on Ronnie Shusett's sofa. That was in the spring of 1975, and we wrote **Alien** on his sofa until he and his wife got tired of having me around and threw me out.

"Soon after, Gary Kurtz called me to work on **Star Wars**' animated computer printouts until about February 1977. By that time, we had made a deal with Fox on **Alien**. Then I was immediately stricken with a debilitating stomach disease, still undiagnosed, and spent most of '77 in the hospital, making decisions by phone. So I was feeling really miserable and in intense pain when Gordon Carroll called up and says 'We're

Alien screenwriter Dan O'Bannon stands on one of the *Nostromo*'s gigantic landing pods during the filming of the movie.

all going over to London to make **Alien**. Let's go!'

"I groaned and bitched, but everybody pursuaded me I'd better do it. I'd already spent thousands of dollars from **Alien** option and preliminary money on medical bills, and it looked like I'd need more, so I went to England. Lo and behold, in the process of working, I made what appears to be a complete recovery. It was the first time I'd felt normal in better than a year.

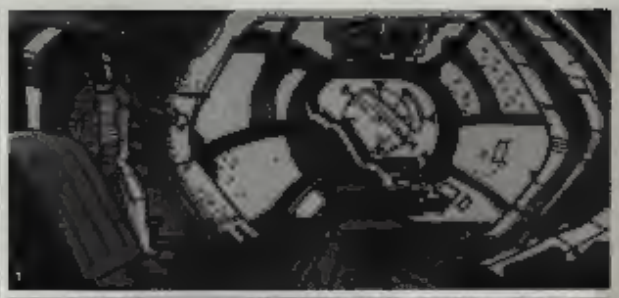
"The budget kept escalating from the very first day they took it to Fox. I think the original figure proposed was $4.5 million, but it went up to $5 million. By the time I finished my work in London and came home they were into shooting and planning on $8.9 million."

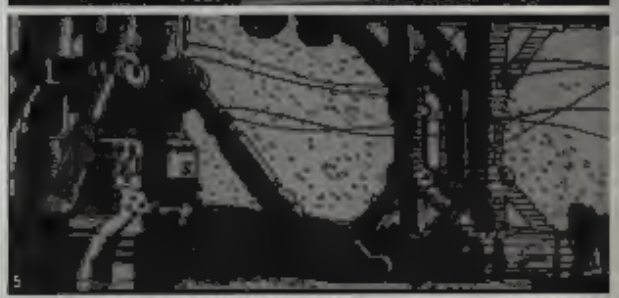
The actual final figure for **Alien** apparently topped $10 million, several hundred-thousand more than **Star Wars**. The problems and procedures are completely different in the two films, however, and among the most difficult were those concerning the alien, which O'Bannon had a hand in solving:

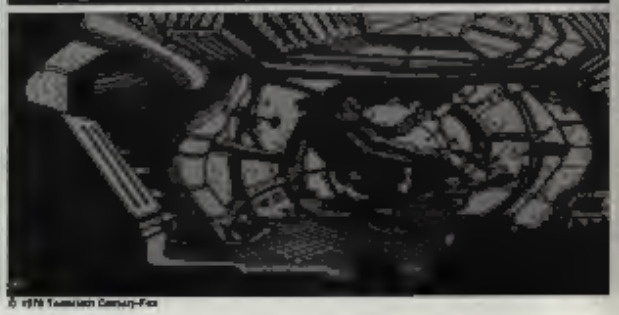
"Sometimes it will be a man in a suit, but overall it's gonna be bits and pieces of different techniques. There'll be some mechanicals, some marionettes. I wish I could say something clean and neat like, 'we built a robot that does everything.' What it is, is a mixture of techniques, but no stop motion animation, because they decided that the strobe effect would be too phony."

From the first appearance of the *Nostromo* to the last shot of the escape ship *Narcissus*, **Alien** remains a powerful, absorbing film of survival, brought into sharp focus by Scott's singular visual approach, and fleshed out by the cast of comfortably familiar faces. Despite its title and overwhelming emphasis on

THE ALIEN STORYBOARDS reproduced on these pages were drawn by the film's director, Ridley Scott. They represent scenes 50-63, the disembarking sequence, and have been condensed here for narrative purposes. (1) Interior of the *Nostromo*: Ash enters the ship's observation blister, and seats himself on the monitor chair. (2) Interior of the airlock: in the glow of the flashing landing light, three suited astronauts prepare to exit from the ship; the airlock opens (lighting change) and they emerge into the asteroid's oppressive wind and gaseous atmosphere. (3) Exterior of the *Nostromo*: gas fills the airlock as the trio step forward into the hydraulic lift. (4) Exterior: the three figures (articulated dummies) are lowered to the surface—model shot. (5) Exterior of landing leg of the *Nostromo*: the spacemen emerge through the planet's eerie mist (see the previous two pages for the actual scene from the film). (6) Interior of blister: Ash continues to monitor the trio on his instrument panel. (7) Interior: close-up of screens as Ash's hand punches up the controls of the TV monitor and the ordinance survey map with its three moving green dots. (8) Interior: Dallas, "Are you receiving?" Ash, "Read you, etc." Dallas: "Getting you free and clear." The figures are seen out the blister's side. (9) Exterior: the trio continues across the planet's surface aided by their helmet lamps. (10) Helmet close-up: they proceed through the night storm, walking blind, aided by the monitors inside their helmets. (11) Exterior: as they appear over the crest of a ledge, geysers blast violently, unexpectedly out of the rocks around them. (12) Exterior: Dallas, Kane and Lambert continue out of sight. (13) Exterior: the spacemen go on searching for the distress signal against a spectacular stellar view. (14) Exterior: their tiny figures are almost lost in the bizarre landscape. (15) Exterior: they mount a rocky crest. (17) Exterior: the trio is frozen in astonishment. Kane: "Jesus Christ!" (18) Exterior—their point of view: a gargantuan alien ship is crashed among the rocks (model). (Compare Scott's storyboard with H.R. Giger's pre-production painting.)







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science-fiction and special effects. **Alien** is also a dramatic picture about people in a crisis situation. The ensemble cast is a cross-section of film character "types" who were chosen not for their superstar bankability, but because they "fit" the roles.

Dallas, Captain of the factory starship, is played by Tom Skerritt, whose recent films have included **Ice Castles** and **The Turning Point**. His earlier credits include the original **M*A*S*H** and many TV productions.

Sigourney Weaver is a young actress who has appeared in off-Broadway productions, and appears frequently in Joe Papp's theater in New York. She makes her motion picture debut in **Alien** as Ripley, the starship's warrant officer.

Veronica Cartwright plays Lambert, the navigator. A noted child star in Hollywood, her films include **The Birds** and **The Children's Hour**, and the more recent productions of **Invasion of the Body Snatchers**.

Harry Dean Stanton has appeared in many movies over the years, including **Cool Hand Luke**, **Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid** and **The Wind and the Lion**. In **Alien**, he plays the role of Brett, the Nostromo's engineering technician.

British John Hurt is the ship's executive officer, and has won acclaim for his notable BBC-TV appearances in **I Claudius** (as Caligula) and **The Naked Civil Servant**. Apart from his many stage roles, his films have included **A Man for all Seasons**, **The Shout** and **Midnight Express**.

Ian Holm is an actor most noted for his Shakespearean roles, playing the part of Ash, the science officer. He has also appeared in such films as **Young Winston**, **The Man in the Iron Mask**, **Les Miserables** and **Holocaust**.

Distinguished black star Yaphet Kotto, who plays Parker, the engineer, has made memorable appearances in many films, including **Live and Let Die**, **Raid on Entebbe** (as Idi Amin) and **Blue Collar**.

The other creative and technical credits are equally impressive, and feature the talents of a comparatively young crew who, nevertheless, have an impressive track record of films among them.

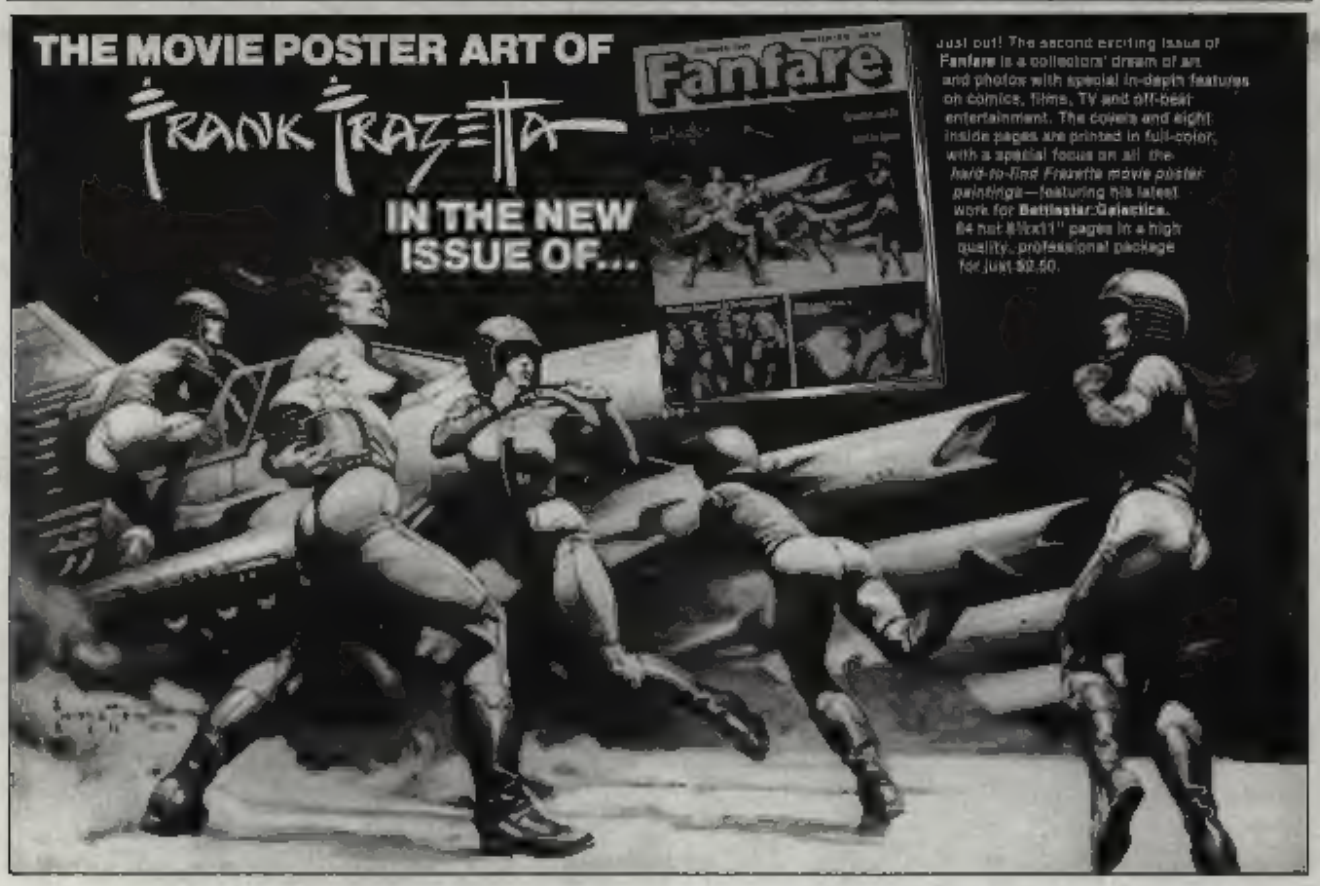
Co-producer Gordon Carroll has previously supervised such pictures as **How to Murder Your Wife**, **Cool Hand Luke** and **Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid**.

David Giler, who also co-produced **Alien**, co-wrote **Myra Breckenridge**, and later scripted **The Parallax View**. He also wrote and directed the **Maltese Falcon** sequel, **The Black Bird**.

Co-producer Walter Hill has written a number of screenplays which includes **The Getaway**, **The Mackintosh Man** and **The Drowning Pool**. He wrote and directed **Hard Times** and **The Driver**.

The special effect are supervised by Brian Johnson and Nick Allder, veterans of **Space—1999** and **2001**, and O'Bannon is both screenwriter and visual concepts consultant. The production designer is Michael Seymour, the editor Terry Rawlings, costume designer John Mollo, and the art directors are Les Dilley and Roger Christian. The latter three won Oscars for their outstanding work on **Star Wars**. The music is to be provided by Jerry Goldsmith, whose **Omen** score won an Academy Award. His credits include **Planet of the Apes**, **Logan's Run**, and the upcoming **Star Trek—The Movie**.

The merchandising aspect of **Alien** is not being left to chance


THE MOVIE POSTER ART OF
FRANK FRAZETTA
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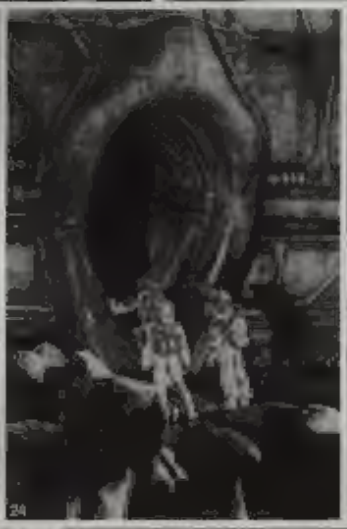

either Charles Lippincott, whose position was to oversee the licensing and publicity for **Star Wars**, is performing the same function for **Alien**. One of the first manifestations of the **Alien** promotion campaign is this *exclusive* feature spread in **MEDIASCENE**, which will be followed by the novelization by Alan Dean Foster (who also wrote the **Star Wars** novelization) in May, from Warner Books.

A hard-bound comic format adaptation of **Alien**, written by Archie Goodwin and illustrated by Walt Simonson will be released in June. **The Alien Book**, a compilation of notes, production drawings and photos from the film, will also be printed by **Heavy Metal's** parent publishing company, Twenty-First Century Communications, slated for June release.

The mind boggles at the potential of **Alien** merchandising should the film take off as expected. "I keep trying to imagine **Alien** dolls?" Dan O'Bannon reflects. "I don't see how they have any merchandising potential whatever. But I'm sure they'll find it—maybe a little rubber **Alien** dolls that sneaks across the room and bits your foot off. Great for people with kids and pets."

Whether it is remembered as an extravagant science-fiction movie or an exciting new exercise in 24th-century gothic film-making, **Alien** is almost sure to register with seismic impact on summer filmgoers.

Just as **Close Encounters** renewed the public's enthusiasm for speculative science fiction, and **Star Wars** brought heroic space opera back from its galactic limbo, **Alien** will undoubtedly elevate the science fiction thriller to a new level of entertainment—establishing the missing third leg of the generic tripod.

As an homage of sorts to the current leader of science-fiction cinema, and maybe just for good luck, Twentieth will unleash **Alien** on May 25—the second anniversary of the release of **Star Wars**.

That gives us a few months to prepare ourselves—and to see if lightning really does strike twice.

Ken Gruzinski

THE ALIEN PHOTOS: [19] Dallas, Lambert and Kane enter the *Nostromo* (R). (20) Seeking the source of the signal, the trio approach the derelict ship. (21) Crew of the *Nostromo*, 1 to r.—Brett (Harry Dean Stanton), Ash (Ian Holm), Kane (John Hurt), Lambert (Veronica Cartwright), Dallas (Tom Skerritt), Ripley (Sigourney Weaver), and Parker (Yaphet Kotto). (22) The astronauts awake from Hypersleep. (23) Ash tracks the three crewmen from his observation blister. (24) Entering the derelict ship. (25) Ash attacks Ripley as a result of the alien's presence. (26) Brett demonstrates the electro-shock instrument he has made to hunt down the alien for Dallas and Lambert. (27) Tom Skerritt suited-up for the asteroid's unearthly atmosphere. (28) The space jockey.

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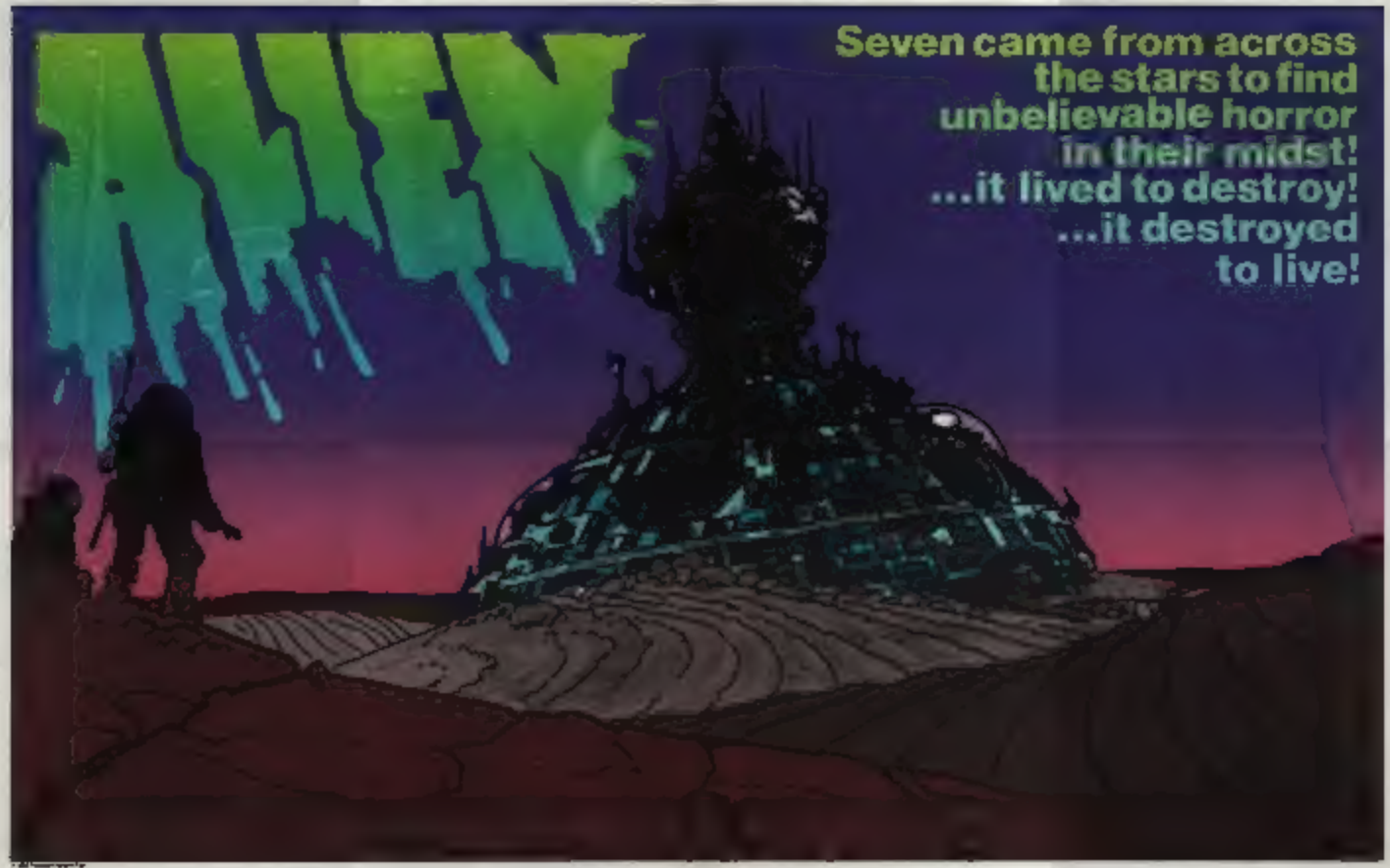
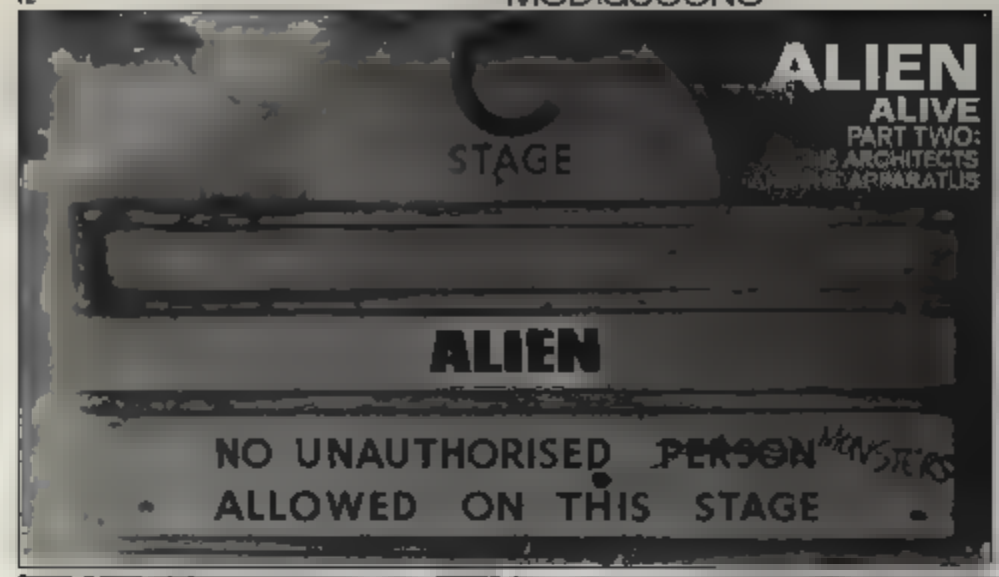
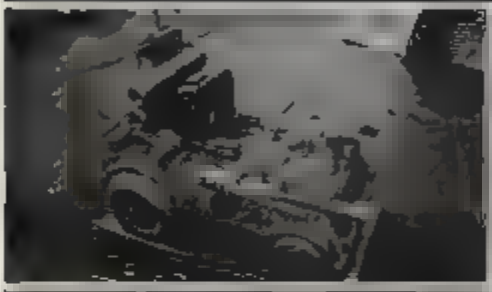

ALIEN
Seven came from across the stars to find unbelievable horror in their midst!
...it lived to destroy!
...it destroyed to live!

ALIEN
ALIVE
PART TWO:
& ARCHITECTS
APPARATUS





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Imagine a tug towing the whole of Manhattan Island. Or a bicycle pulling along Times Square. Or a normal-sized movie shooting stage tugging an area a mile-and-a-half square.

Then you'll have a rough idea of the relative sizes of the unique Nostromo starship and the vast oil refinaries it tows through interplanetary space in Alien.

The script calls for a well-used, slightly battered starship which acts as a kind of massive tug to tow a series of these vast oil refineries -rather like a huge intergalactic articulated truck— the whole supposedly one-and-a-half miles long and weighing an awesome 200 million tons.

We started by building model sets then an actual section of a starship corridor from part of the operational bridge, explains production designer Michael Seymour. Then, after further discussions, we began building the sets in earnest.

The Nostromo has three levels or 'decks' and the designers first toyed with the notion of building a huge three-story set, but it was decided that this would prove impractical for filming purposes. So the "A" (or top) level was constructed first, filling much of the giant "C" sound stage at Shepperton Studios.

The "A" level comprised the astronauts' living areas, messroom, computer suites, infirmary, many (nkm) corridors and, most important and spectacular, the operational bridge. Here, amidst a veritable technological fairyland the seven astronauts go at their own individual and immense, feather tasks to navigate and operate the starship, surrounded by forty television screens (variously sized 5" 9" 13" 15" and 22") showing different pictures of computer readouts, technological and navigational information, maps, and views of the space area outside. Masses of other technical equipment was packed together plus hundreds of switches and literally thousands of flashing indicator lights. The many TV screens were fed pictures and films from an intricate special video-center situated at the side of the sound stage headed by video coordinator Dick Hewitt.

The numerous banks of circuits and electronic equipment on the walls were prepared by the props and construction departments and ingeniously made up from old aircraft, automobiles and radio and TV sets.

We must have spent thou-

ALIEN PROPS AND SETS: (1) Sign outside the soundstage at Shepperton Studios in England showing typical marching problem (2) Land vehicle originally conceived by Ron Cobb. (3) Director Scott operating camera. (4) Magnetic tracer. (5) Hand weapon. (6) Astro-chart used by navigator Lambert. (7-8) Corridors of the Nostromo. (9) The ship's commissary. (10) Space suit storage area. (11-13) The bridge of the Nostromo—compare these with the drawings on the following pages.

sands of dollars on scrap, from old jet-aircraft engines particularly," said Les Dilley (co-art director with Roger Christian).

And it's paid off handsomely because it all looks so authentic. Dilley and Christian, incidentally, both won Oscars for their work on Star Wars. Dilley as co-art director and Christian as set decorator. Alien costume designer John Mollo also won an Oscar for his contribution to Star Wars.

The operational bridge on the Nostromo is probably the most technologically detailed and authentic scientific movie set ever constructed. Especially when you realize that everything works. Walk onto the bridge, push a button or throw a switch and something happens, whether it's a light flashing, a door closing, an alarm buzzer sounding or a TV picture zooming into close-up. As Michael Seymour said: "This starship does practically everything but fly."

Walk down a corridor from the bridge and you come to the mess-room, where the crew eat and relax. To one side is a small kitchen area with every modern convenience you could wish for, and various foods neatly vacuum-packed into powder and tablet form, often easily identified by tiny models of the food available, such as a miniature banana, orange or apple. Unbreakable crockery is neatly arranged on shelves, and there's a sink too—even astronauts have to do the washing-up sometimes.

Stroll down another padded and illuminated corridor and you come to the infirmary equipped with everything a doctor or nurse might need, including medicines, drugs, an operating table which glides out-of-sight into the wall, and a fearsome overhead-suspended set of surgical instruments.

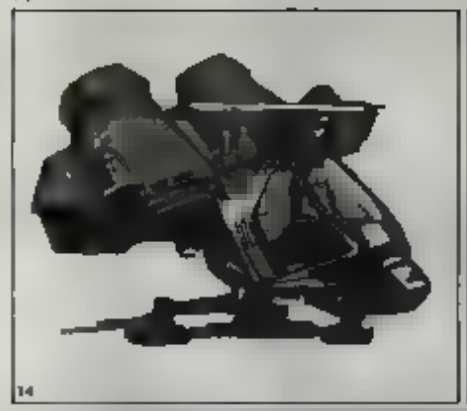
In another section of "A" level is the remarkable "hypersleep" area where, in flower-petal-lined, perspex-enclosed beds, the crew are able to sleep for any period they choose, from an hour to a year or more.

In an intersecting lobby you find two large, perspex-fronted wardrobe cases, containing spare space suits for the crew, complete with helmets and other accoutrements.

The Nostromo's movements are guided by a remarkable computer called "Mother" at the command of the seven astronauts, who also rely on it for all kinds of other information and facts. Why "Mother?" Because its official technological identification is "MU/TH/UR 6000."

Later sequences for Alien were filmed on the two lower levels of the starship built separately on other stages. "B" level the general maintenance area, and "C" level, containing the vast engine rooms plus a seemingly-endless network of complex machinery-filled corridors, and the giant "claw-room," into which the huge landing-claws of the starship retract when not in use.

"One of the basic ideas of all these complicated starship interior sets is that you can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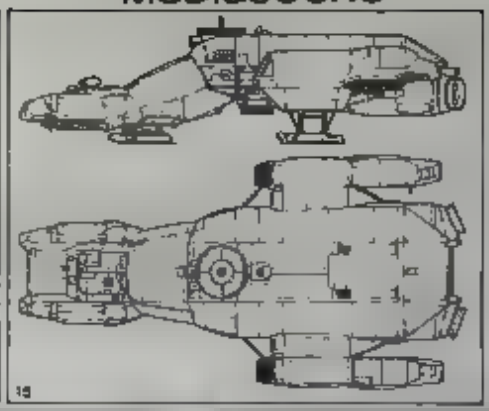
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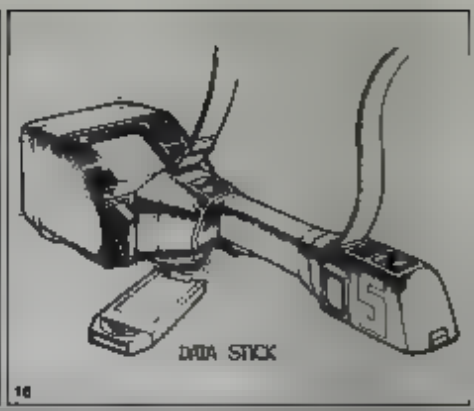

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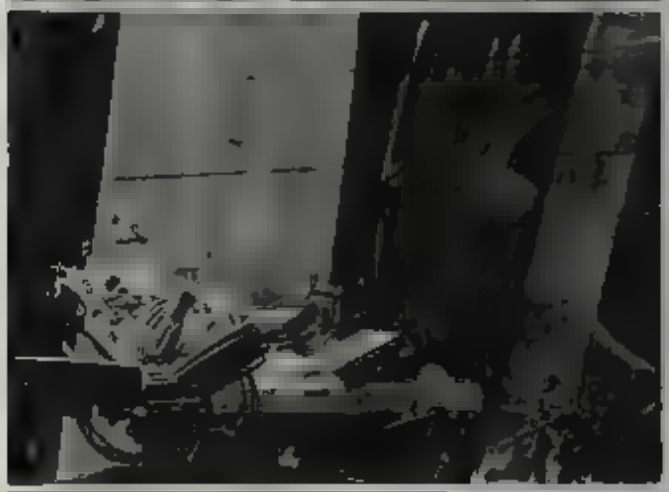

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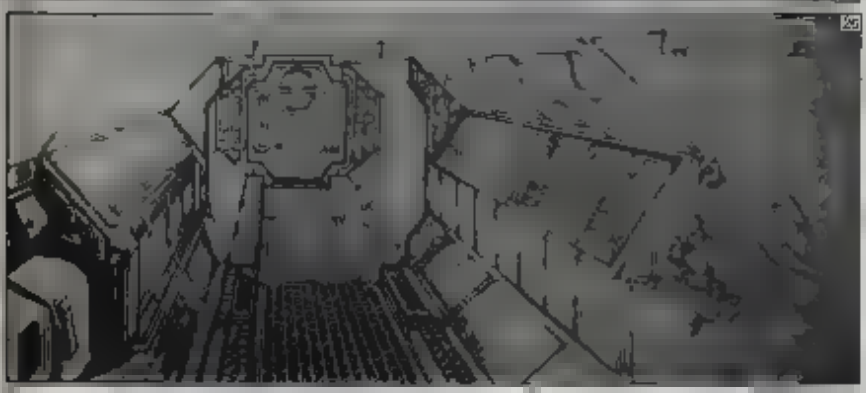

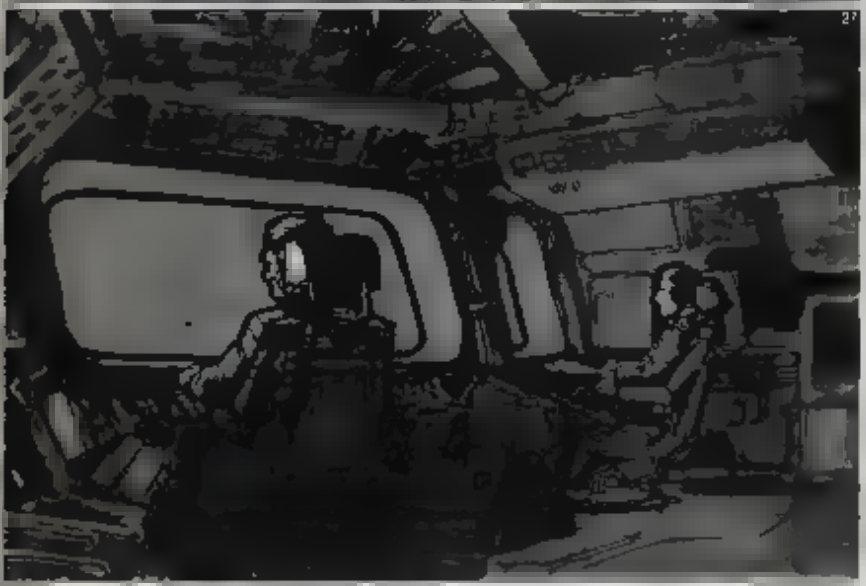

actually walk from corridor to corridor, from bridge to mess, from mess to infirmary and so on, thus giving both the actors and the audience the feeling of being inside a vast starship, both huge and claustrophobic at one and the same time," says production designer Michael Seymour. "We want people to have the impression that it's a real place, that it's more science-fact than science-fiction, and also that the whole ship is well used, lived in and slightly battered after years of service. After all, the crew are really interstellar truckers who are just doing, what is to them, ordinary day-to-day work. They're really like top-level truckdrivers who happen to operate a complex starship in space instead of a rig along the motorways on Earth.

"They're freebooters, in a way, who extract appropriate ores and minerals from planets, tow them back to Earth and share in the proceeds.

Then their whole lives change when they're awakened from their hyper-sleep by the mysterious planet's distress bleeper - which may well have been sounding out for millions of years, who knows? - then land on the planet and encounter the Alien for the first time.

The Nostromo is a set to remember - a technological miracle come to movie life. While it doesn't actually achieve "lift-off" it does almost everything else.

All the interior and planet surface sequences for **Alien** were filmed in England, at Shepperton Studios. But the six months of special effects and model photography were based at Bray Studios, Windsor (once the home of Hammer horror films), about fifteen miles away.

There special effects director Brian Johnson, and supervisor Nick Allder, both of whom worked on **2001 and Space: 1999**, were in charge of the highly-complex and technical magical work that goes into the breathtaking sequences that movie audiences will eventually see of starships hurtling through outer space amidst galaxies of stars and planets.

The majority of the outer space effects sequences take place early in the film and are photographed in the single-negative technique of 2001, as opposed to **Star Wars'** Dykstra-flex multi-layered image style, which reputedly will give viewers clearer more perfect screen visuals.

Allder and director Ridley Scott's attention to detail is staggering, extending to the point of reshooting some of the earlier footage completed by Brian Johnson who left **Alien** soon after the initial problems were solved to meet his **Star Wars** commitments.

Special effects supervisor Nick Allder explained some of the methods being used in **Alien**, without giving away any of the drama. "Our main model of the Nostromo starship is eight feet long which represents 800 feet in the story in the film, the starship is also 1½ miles across! With our special techniques we're able to camera-track right through space, stars, planets and so on, into a close-up shot of the craft, and actually show the astronauts moving about inside - all in one continuous shot! But won't tell you how we did that.

"Generally we use multiple exposure techniques, employing the original negative, thereby obtaining far better quality than we might otherwise have.

"We're not using 'travelling matte' or blue-screen backings for this picture for various reasons. The whole picture is shot in rather low-key lighting, so we can't suddenly cut from the starship interior to outside space and terrific high-contrast quality because it wouldn't appear consistent. Consequently our lighting of the models has to be fairly low-key as well. Using travelling mattes wouldn't work in these circumstances.

"We use the system of 'rotoscoping' quite a lot, which involves taking a sequence frame by frame, making line-drawings, then hand-painted mattes, and shooting them in high-contrast to actually create our own very tight mattes and their eventual effects.

"It all that sounds complicated, then it is. Except to the "brix" technicians who know exactly what they're doing.

The alien itself was a unique source of problems, and required unusual ingenuity due to the decision to avoid stop-motion animation, such as that used by Ray Harryhausen. The inability of stop-motion to create totally smooth and naturalistic results dictated that full-size models of the creature be made, and carefully filmed to achieve highly realistic effects.

The dark moody technical approach of **Alien** facilitated the handling of many of the alien sequences by allowing the mood of the film to superimpose the viewers imagination on the screen's images - a welcome change from the usual fright mask approach to horror films. This is not to say that we never see the alien in full shocking close-up, but the film's style forces the viewer to participate by creating in his mind what he can't see on the screen, and we all know that the darkest visions of all come from within.●

ALIEN PRE-PRODUCTION ART

1) Early concept of Cobb's Heli-Jet. (2-5) Two views of a jet transporter craft. (3-6) Electronic Data-Stick by Cobb. (7-19) Various space suits designed by Moebius. 20) Early concept by Moebius of the discovery of the space jockey. (21) Mobile tracking vehicle. (22) Nostromo personnel lift and airlock exterior. (23-24) Another version of the Heli-Jet. (25) The Nostromo infirmary. (26) Corridor by Ron Cobb. (27) Observation room on "B" level. (28) Cobb's final concept drawing of the bridge. Note how closely the finished sets followed the design drawings, almost down to the last detail. The sets have now been dismantled.

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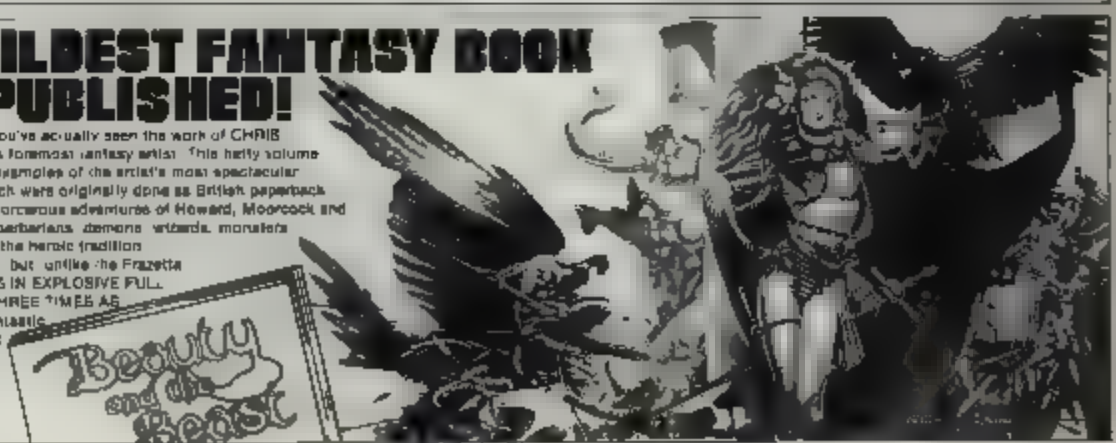

ALIEN ACHIEVED

PART THREE: THE ART AND THE ARTISTS

Like **Star Wars**, **Close Encounters** and a host of other films that rely on their extraordinary visual appeal **Alien**'s most important building blocks began to take shape on the drawing board when artists turned the original ideas into breathtaking images.

Art directors and production designers have been important contributors to the craft of movie-making for decades. Their vision is second only to the director's in determining the "look" and "character" of a film, such as Ken Adam's sophisticated chromium James Bond sets, William Cameron Menzies' Deco futuristic **Shape of Things to Come**, and Ralph McQuarrie's evocative technological **Star Wars'** designs.

Like those, **Alien** is a film with many requirements. Fantastic ones that could well make history in cinematastic achievement and at the box office. Few, if any, multi-million dollar productions have so small a cast to keep the action going - especially a cast of what really amounts to a group of character actors and unknowns. The settings are also limited, as least in number to the starship *Nostromo* and the asteroid on which it lands. It stands to reason that this kind of economy calls for a powerful story and overpowering visuals. Those special requirements call for special talents.

To handle those requirements, Brandywine Productions (formed by the film's three producers) hired four top-notch SF illustrators whose work has extended well beyond the common perimeter of their field. Ron Cobb, H R Giger, Chris Foss and Moebius. All four have contributed their efforts to make **Alien** the most unique science fiction/fright film of the decade.

Ron Cobb is a working cartoonist and illustrator whose career just happens to overlap into the movie business. He took time out from his commitments of **Conan** and **Jeremiah Smith** to talk with **MEDIASCENE**. **Alien** stands out as one of Cobb's biggest film assignments, and came about through his previous association with Dan O'Bannon dating back to the early '70s and **Dark Star**.

"I met Dan some years back because of his interest in fantastic films, then didn't see him again for a number of years. He contacted me next when he was in the middle of **Dark Star**, and wanted to know if I'd be interested in giving him some of my comments on it. When I got there, he had an exterior design for the spaceship, and started suggesting things. He was very enthusiastic with that film, and we've been working with him ever since.

"So basically it's all been Dan. He went to work on **Star Wars** and **Dune**, and each time he tried to get me on those projects. But since I didn't have a great deal of film experience, producers were quite reluctant to hire me - except for George Lucas, who'd been familiar with my cartoons. George thought I

might like to try designing some of the aliens in the cantina sequence, and he liked them very much.

"Then Dan finally sold his script, and Alien was underway. He suggested that they use me, and the same problem arose. But I was taken on sort of a trial basis for about seven months in California, before the entire production moved to London.

"I did a lot of preliminary designs with Chris Foss before they picked a director and it was a real opportunity for me to show them what I could do. We went through hundreds of designs, many of which were thrown out when Ridley Scott came on the film. Truthfully, I can't say I didn't expect it."

Most of Cobb's early work based on a division of labor that quickly changed with Scott's take-over of Alien. Initially Ron worked on the Earth-based technology designs, interiors, space suits and hardware; British SF illustrator Chris Foss, concentrated on the Alien ship designs, and was assigned the Nostromo because of his reputation for spacecraft conceptualization. The crucial alien creature sequences were exclusively reserved for the bizarre imagination of Swiss artist, Giger.

Famed French artist, Moebius (the science fiction pseudonym used Jean Giraud), is best known in America through his contributions to Heavy Metal with the existential SF strip, *Arzach*, and *The Airtight Garage of Jerry Cornelius*, in addition to his series of Lt. Blueberry books. It was while Moebius was working on the European production of *Dune* that he first encountered Dan O'Bannon, who was responsible for bringing him into Alien as one of the production designers. Moebius was primarily responsible for the creation of the space suits used in the film, which were among the nine drawings he produced in the early stages of the movie's development.

When the creative design shop finally moved to the Shepperton Studios, in London, and director Scott entered the picture, things began to change.

"Ridley wanted to move me into hardware design," Cobb revealed. "because he liked some of the ideas I'd come up with. So, an additional six months slipped by while I worked further on Alien, during which time I had a larger and larger role in designing the overall technology.

"Altogether, I did about a year's worth of art for Alien. Of course, it's the latter six months you'll be seeing on the screen. All the early stuff was Foss's work and I suppose it had some influence on the thinking of the later designs, but not directly. I probably ended up creating about two-thirds of the Earth technology both interior and exterior sets.

"Ridley is an excellent designer himself incidentally, and greatly influenced the look of the film. I did some preliminary work on the design of the monster, but that was really Giger's responsibility.

"Actually, we probably wrecked out as much material as we kept. They didn't end up using too many of Chris Foss' pieces, either. All that's left of Moebius' art is the basic design of the space suit. Giger did the final design for virtually all of the alien technology. The space ship and everything, and they followed his work very closely. He also wound up designing the alien planet on which the *Nostromo* lands.

Perhaps because of the sheer abundance of visual material to draw upon, Alien took a while to settle into a singular cinematic approach. Cobb's work focused on a fairly straight technical portrayal of spaceflight. Scott and the producers wanted to avoid a sterile science-fiction approach, and leaned more toward a fantastic concept.

"They pressured us a lot to bend the technology to have a somewhat similar look to *Star Wars*, sort of high-believable, but rather highly stylized - or perhaps a better word would be romanticized. The interior of the ship finally looked like a deep dance hall of a World War II bomber and a genuine projection of what a space ship of the future might really look like - or a combination of all of them.

"The theory was to give Alien more of a horror look, but I never personally agreed with that, and didn't have as much influence as I'd like to have had.

"There's a certain awkwardness in the naturalistic portrayal of the space flight, partly because most of the people involved in this film had never made one like it before. They didn't understand what they were getting into, and were put off by concepts like no sound in space and all the gravitational effects. They didn't want to be bothered so it's all just kind of forgotten about.

"On the other hand, I wanted the ship to look like a gothic castle, but realized that approach - it might have been a bit too much."

Cobb's last few months in London allowed him to do more than draw, however. There was enough time for him to work with the draftsmen who translated his designs into working blueprints, and even watch the construction of the sets.

"On the whole, I'm pretty happy with the way my ideas were eventually realized. It was fascinating to watch the process all the way through, even some of the set dressings. I was pleased with things I had a fair amount of control over, but those I didn't oversee were a little disappointing.

"Then there were always surprising contributions from draftsmen and other people who would occasionally design a set that would turn out very, very well. It was a mixed bag of many styles and many approaches. The look of the film kept evolving as it went along. I would like to have stuck to a particular style or approach, but there were a lot of other people involved who kept changing their minds, so the ship went through

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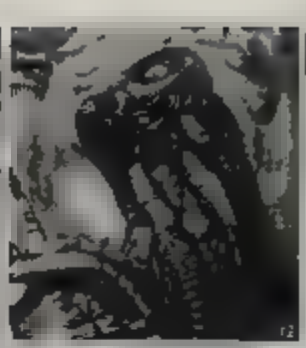

many photos of design. Almost everything, including the acting, evolved and grew as it went along.

While Alien provides an auspicious debut for Cobb's design talents, the fact remains that he real star of the film will be the creature in the title role.

The assignment of visualizing the alien went to a distinguished Swiss painter and designer H.R. Giger (pronounced Geeger with a hard "G") and came about through the dedicated efforts of Dan O'Bannon.

"From the moment I met him in Paris and stared at his work I knew that he could paint what others couldn't begin to imagine," fought for a year to get him on the picture, because I felt he could paint Pickman's model if he wanted to."

Giger's paintings have been exhibited in leading art galleries throughout Europe, and appear-

THE ART OF ALIEN: 1. Early version of the space rug by Chris Foss. 2) Concept painting of cylindrical spheroid by Foss. (3) Close-up detail by Moebius of the astronauts' helmet and space suit markings. (4) Unused machine concept by Foss. (5) Ron Cobb's original design for the escape ship, *Narcissus*. (6) Pressurized space suit by Moebius to be worn inside the ship. 7) Moebius' final version of the space suit. John Mollo incorporated a Japanese influence into the actual finished suits- see Part One. (8) H.R. Giger's design for the derelict ship. See Scott's storyboard in Part One. (9) Entrances to the derelict ship by Giger. 10-12) A sampling of Giger's biochanoid concepts which combine semi-balances of the human form with radically unhuman counterparts. 13) Another version of the space suit by Cobb. 14) Early version of the space rug by Foss, showing the oil refineries hooked up in tandem. At this time the ship was called the *Leviathan*. 15) Another version of the same ship. 16) Undercarriage details of the *Leviathan* by Foss. Note the similarity between this illustration and the actual plans as shown in Part One. 17) Swiss artist H.R. Giger in his studio working on a pre-production painting from the film. The scene illustrated is from the chilling egg chamber sequence that occurs while the spacemen are exploring the derelict alien ship and suggests the kind of souvenir they pick up on their way. 18) One of the most unearthly yet fascinatingly bizarre paintings from Giger's Necronom series. (CENTERSPREAD ART) This is one of Moebius' original concept drawings showing the astronauts as they encounter the derelict ship. It is evident in this early stage that the idea of a gothic alien ship was under consideration, and that Moebius attempted to visualize the notion by adding towers and spires to the very baroque architecture of the basic design. Absent from the scene is the planet's tortured landscape, at this point, simply an arid desert waste.

ed as best-selling posters, yet they virtually defy description. One has to see, indeed experience, a Giger painting to realize what a remarkable artist he is.

When Alien is released many people throughout the world will have their first glimpse of H.R. Giger's unique work. They will either love it or hate it, for there are no two ways with Giger's paintings and designs. Two things are certain. They're never boring—and they are unforgettable.

Giger's art combines erotic-ism, several kinds of symbolism, beautiful but highly-stylized women, machinery, bones, skulls, demons, intricate and exquisite designs, babies, blood, birds, landscapes, bondage, misery, despair and often beauty of a terrible but elegant kind. It hovers on the edge of a frenzied and almost three-dimensional hell. It has echoes of the work of Hieronymous Bosch, Salvador Dali and Richard Dadd, but is purely and originally the products of Giger and his incredible imagination and conceptual vitality.

Giger's main assignments have been to design the terrifying alien itself, the surface of a mysterious planet and the interior and exterior of a strange alien spacecraft, apparently thousands of years old. He has done other designs for the picture, too, but these have been his major contributions.

"Obviously, I cannot describe the alien creature at this stage," explains Giger, who always dresses in black, in his soft Swiss-German accent. "But it is elegant, fast and terrible. It exists to destroy—and destroys to exist. Once seen it will never be forgotten. It will remain with people who have seen it, perhaps in their dreams or nightmares, for a long, long time. Perhaps for all time. I even dream about the alien myself—so much that I'm often frightened of going to sleep."

Perhaps Giger has good reason to be frightened: many of his paintings are visions straight from the doors of hell. The most unsettling are reminiscent of grotesque cyborg mutations. He refers to them as Biomechanoids. Some appear as legions of sodomous, slobbering babies chewing cigars, with Charles Laughton faces and arms ending in machine-gun barrels. Others have no spines but instead feature external spiked steel-cable tails held on by Pincer-like insect claws, and have exhaust pipes in their skulls. A number of them simply defy description, and have engendered critical condemnation for their heavy sexual and Satanic content even as they sell by the thousands in books and on posters.

Several documentary films have been made about Giger and his paintings and sculptures. A number of books have also been published on him, including the oversized Necronomicon, containing most of his best work to date.

Giger does not like to talk about his paintings too much, preferring that they speak for themselves. But he does have this to say:

"Some people believe my paintings show a future world and perhaps they do. But I paint from reality by putting ideas together and perhaps when I have finished, it could show the future—who knows? If people want to interpret my work as warnings about too much overpopulation, disease and mechanization in the future, that is up to them. I like to combine human beings, creatures and biomechanics. And I love to work with bones—they are elegant and functional and, after all, are part of human beings. I have many bones in my home in Zurich and study them and use them as models. Skeletons, too.

"The colors I use are usually gray, white and brown—these are the colors of my beloved Siamese cat. I use black ink, too, and like to make use of an airbrush quite a lot. I like white on black also. It gives my paintings a kind of translucent look and sometimes almost a three-dimensional appearance.

"They say my work is often depressing and pessimistic with an emphasis on death, blood, overcrowding, strange beings and so on, but I don't really think it is. There is hope and a kind of beauty in there somewhere, too, if you look for it. The creatures I design and paint are very much like their own environment: one comes from the other.

"It all began when, years ago in my youth, I had many strange dreams—and nightmares. When I awoke I would paint the things I had seen in my dreams, which made me feel much better and the dreams would go away. Until next time.

Apparently straight science-fiction has already become commonplace and passe, so Giger's menace will be the true centerpiece in the Alien tapestry. His medieval visions of a Necronomic horror among the stars strikes just the right note in the abstract chord of O'Bannon's original story.

Understandably, the producers are keeping a tight security lid on these special effects sequences, and only a few people directly involved with the technical aspects know exactly how the entire film will eventually look. Expectations are high, and the preliminary art on these pages shows the promise of things to come.

Ron Cobb, while admittedly biased, has seen about two-thirds of Alien in rough cut form, and feels "it looks very good, surprisingly good.

"I think Dan will be pleased. You know, for a while they strayed pretty far from his original concept, but eventually they found their way back into the primary science-fiction, horror framework. By the time the principal photography was finished, everybody was looking forward to seeing how all the pieces fit together.

"At the very least, Dan won't have to sleep on anyone's sofa for a while—I hope."■

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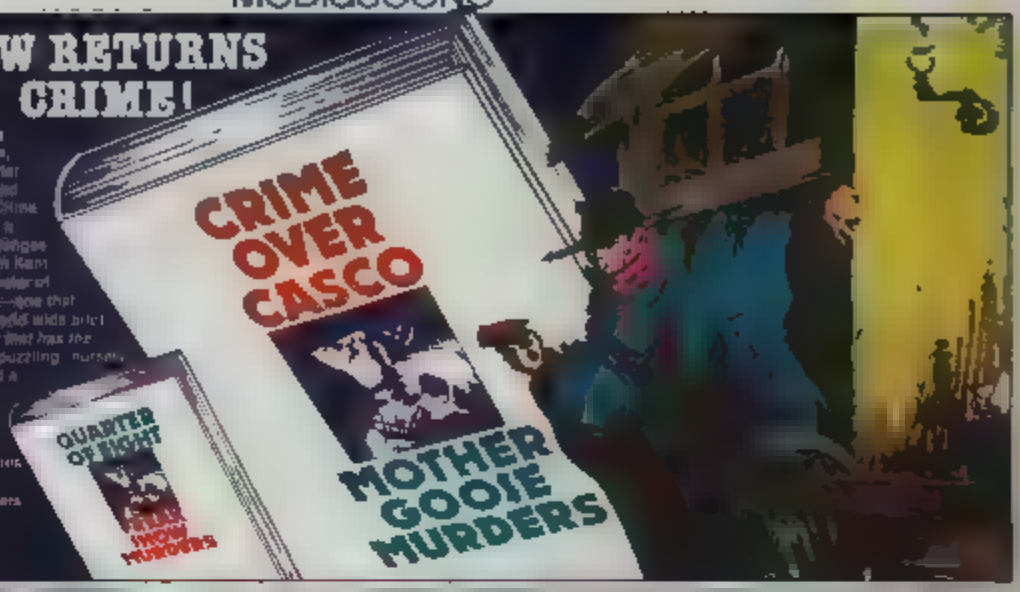

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MEDIASCENE

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SPANNING VAST REACHES OF SPACE, A TITANIC BATTLE RAGES BETWEEN THE FORCES OF THE TYRANNICAL EMPIRE AND MASSED SPACE FLEETS OF THOSE REBELLING AGAINST IT...

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THE SYNDICATED STAR WARS

RUSS MANNING SHOWS THE WAY FROM PELLUCIDAR TO TATTOOINE

We like Star Wars, but Russ Manning's been a connoisseur to fans of films and comics, so it was somehow fitting that the two would artistically get together in an artistic project combining the best of both—the spectacle of the film and the skill of the artist.

On Sunday, March 11 the new Star Wars strip will make its national debut, after being serialized for over a year. With that in mind, MEDIASCENE editor Jim Starlin interviewed Manning on the production of one of the most eagerly awaited adventure newspaper strips in years.

JS: Russ, what kind of approach are you taking for the Star Wars strip? Is it different from Tarzan and the others that you've worked on over the years?

RM: Trust you to come up with a tough question. I don't know that there's any difference in the way I'll go about it, but there's a vast difference in the way the people at Star Wars consider their strip as opposed to the way that Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. views theirs. Beginning with the supervision of Carol Titelman and on up to George Lucas, the strip goes through careful quality control—I guess that's the best term for it. They want to see the panels, then the tabs. Even how it looks printed—they're being very, very careful with their property. ERB leaves the quality control aspect up to me.

JS: Does Lucas himself approve the scripts?

RM: It's my understanding that the approach I used to Star Wars is unacceptable to him.

JS: You're back writing and drawing the strips, Russ. Do you work from the shot guides supervised by the Star Wars Corporation?

RM: No. I came up with the story synopses, submit it to Carol, who goes over it and we have a conference. The basic outline is approved before I go into breakdowns.

JS: How long will each of the stories run, in terms of weeks?

RM: There's no to the storylines, and they have continuously very short, punchy stories.

JS: Maybe two months for the stories?

RM: Two months maximum. But they prefer not to go into those lengths. The continuity between one of the beginning, the shorter stories will allow more newspapers to carry the comic-especially, I don't like to tell these kind of stories, personally.

I know the last Tarzan ran [illegible]

year, because I can build character, depth and plotting, much better in a long story.

JS: Did you have to work up a number of drawings to get the feeling of the strip before you actually started on it, or did you get it right away?

RM: No, I didn't hit it right away, especially in the dailies. I did seven Sunday pages, and there was nothing wrong with any of them. But I made a very bad blunder on the dailies. The story has Luke and Leia going to a gambling world to make a contact with someone on behalf of the Rebel Alliance, and it seemed logical that they would dress up in the Las Vegas-type atmosphere. I didn't notice it, but Carol did—they were not recognizable. We had to put them back into their original clothing, and decided to keep them that way from now on.

JS: How will the Star Wars strip differ from your 80s Gold Key Comic, Magnus, Robot Fighter, for example? It was really a first class science-fiction series.

RM: Thanks for the compliment. My son—he's twelve, and has a real keen eye—tells me that quite a few of my robots and exhibits look a lot like those in Magnus rather than Star Wars. I have what he has to say to heart. So, I'll use as much of the imagination, style and ability that I used in Magnus, but try to clothe it in the particular look that the film had. Star Wars' objects are less sleek, less streamlined.

JS: They're more like NASA-designed hardware, and I take it that instead of doing the Manning type of design, which was rather organic-looking and very streamlined, they will have more of the Bob McCall—Ivan Johnston-Ralph McQuarrie look with lots bolts and gears, dials and flaps.

RM: The answer is yes. And I will do the best I can without copying. If it comes down to being a slavish copy of that group—and you hit them all square on the head—or doing Magnus, I would tend to do Magnus, because I don't feel the need to copy. But, if I didn't try to incorporate and draw that particular design style, I'd be making as big a mistake as when I put the wrong clothes on Luke.

JS: Whose decision was it to produce different storylines for the Sundays and the dailies?

RM: Carol's and mine. I suggested it to her and gave the very best reasons I could think of.

JS: What were those Russ?

RM: Well, except for a period [illegible]

know of any storylines running in both Sundays and dailies that aren't held back by having to repeat too often. It's done, of course, in the soap opera strips with a degree of success. Because they don't really tell an action-adventure story. They deal more with inter-relations and things more intellectual than visual. But adventure stories have to move like lightning. I can do a faster, better, more punchy story if I don't have to repeat anywhere. When it got to the syndicate level, they discovered that the European market does not want the same story in the Sunday and daily. So, thank heavens, the money backed up the creative part.

JS: Were there any other difficulties you encountered with the strip?

RM: There is one point that may be of interest to you and your readers. When the syndicate [illegible] decided against reading the [illegible] again at this point?

RM: It was never even mentioned. I didn't even know that Al had done a presentation using the film's plot.

JS: Archie Goodwin actually did the writing. Williamson drew it—a two-week sequence based on the opening of the film.

RM: They probably felt the first story line had enough exposition that as far as new situations, I think there's some really interesting possibilities—and Marvel's probably going to beat me to it—is the character of Obi Wan Kenobi, back when he was a Jedi Knight. It would absolutely blow my mind! I'd really love to get into that.

JS: Would you do that in terms of flashbacks, Russ?

RM: Well, yes and no. We'd use a framing device. It's also being [illegible]

used in the Star Wars novels that are being written. It's the kind of device that will tie our stories together, and they'll use it to tie the novels together too. I doubt if it'll be used in the movie. Threepio will be telling each story to a Rebel Alliance space-computer, trying all the while together about their relation. As soon as every sequence is over, there will be a scene with Threepio back at the computer. Now, how in the world he'd know about Obi Wan Kenobi's youth, I don't say; it could very well be that the computer would tell him the story. Kind of a look and forth thing.

JS: The syndicate said they're hoping for at least 200 papers; currently they have 150 signed with the East Coast split to come in. That leads me to an obvious question. You're going to handle Tarzan and Star Wars. Isn't there some kind of conflict between these two?

RM: Well, not at Star Wars, at, for that matter, at Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. Both strips will get my full attention and the best work I can possibly produce.

JS: How does it affect your time schedule?

RM: Horribly! Terribly!

JS: Have you given up sleeping or eating?

RM: Tarzan takes me about three days, but not hard. Not days. When Star Wars came, and I was so thrilled with the challenge that I thought, "He's try this, take Tarzan and find the best inker on the West Coast." Thank heavens Mike Royer was available at that time—and as we're going to try

JS: Will we be inking both [illegible]

their very characteristic dialog. The Sunday story will have so many big panels as we can work in, plus space ships, alien worlds, battles, explosions, and that aspect of the movie. The dailies, on the other hand, will have an emphasis on characterization.

JS: I've noticed that you have Artoo Detoo language in balloons in the Sunday pages that I have in front of me. Are you beginning to understand what he says?

RM: I think I can. I can do things like—well, if he's talking about fighting, he can go "bang-bang." I don't know if you're familiar with the Asterix books, but one of the very first ones, Asterix in Egypt, has the Egyptians talk in hieroglyphics, like little squiggles. I tried it a couple of times, but it had the feeling of language rather than electronic sounds, and that would be incorrect. Artoo Detoo made sounds that were descriptive of his emotions, but it doesn't really a language. Like when he got ray-gunned by the Jawas, he actually screamed, and when he gets bitterly disappointed, he goes, "Ohhhh." So that's what I'm trying to do with Artoo's language.

JS: I get the feeling that some of these things will develop as time goes on, just by sheer trial and error.

RM: You're right, no doubt about it.

JS: And you thought it was going to be easy.

RM: If this had come along when I was a kid, I think it would have been beyond me. But, thank heavens, it came along now that I've got the experience and some [illegible]

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FOUR FROM BORIS

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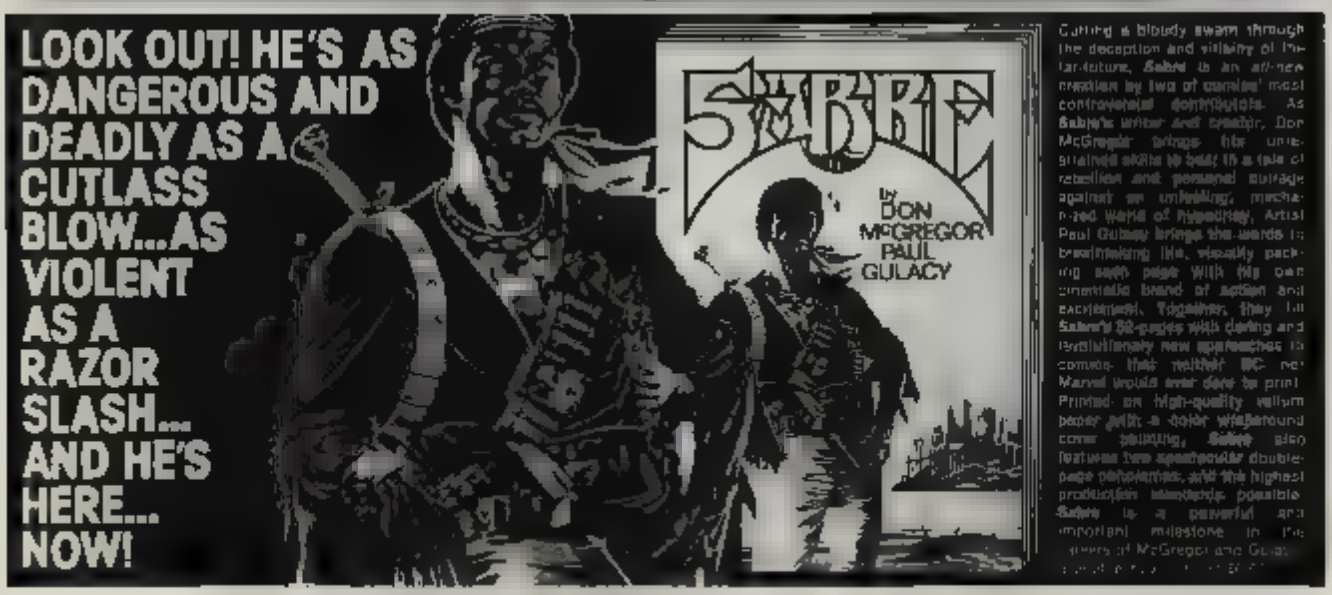
LOOK OUT! HE'S AS DANGEROUS AND DEADLY AS A CUTLASS BLOW...AS VIOLENT AS A RAZOR SLASH... AND HE'S HERE... NOW!
SABRE
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BATTLE OF THE AFTERNOON WARRIORS

SHOGUN

A Shogun
a medieval
Japanese politician
title meaning Supreme Military
Dictator—as Hideo Sugiyama
upon only one man at a time
by the reigning Emperor. And
because the Emperor himself
was known as The Divine Son
of Heaven, a Shogun was
omnipotent, almost fully appoin-
ted, ruling the nation's army,
citizens and treasury. To be a
Shogun Warrior was to stand at
the feet of a mortal god, and a
great honor for a samurai.

The Mattel toy company has
hung upon this concept of
almost mythic super-soldiers as
a touchstone for their phenom-
enally successful line of gimm-
icky six-inch metal Shogun
Warriors, taking heroic fighters
tried and proven in Japan's
myriad comic books, animated
cartoons and live-action TV
serials. These characters, in
turn are adapted as sci-fi ver-
sions of old Japanese legends
and fairy tales, conveniently
closing the circle of time with
efficiency and imagination.

The Shogun Warrior toy story
properly begins in April, 1961, in
the sporty pages of Shonen
Magazine, with the very first
robotic robot strip in Japan, titled
Atom Taishi (Ambassador Atom).
subsequently retitled Tetsuwan-
Atom (Mighty Atom), and best
known in America as the
animated cartoon series Astro
Boy.

Tetsuwan-Atom was the most
popular of all the thirty plus-sixty
Japanese comic strips, with a
record run of 17 years. It was
created and drawn by Osamu
Tezuka, the Japanese Jack Kirby,
who was responsible for seven
successful science-fiction series,
dozens of love, horror and crime
strips, and even Kimba the White
Lion. Tezuka was responsible for
all comics
growth in Japan.

Influenced cinematic techni-
que by the printed page, and
was heavily influenced by the
Walt Disney approach to detail
and epic story construction.

Astro proved to be quite
popular in the newly industria-
lized Japan of the 50s, and
another artist/writer, Mitsuteru
Yokoyama, eventually found a
communicative link with the
ancient fables of the Main a
towering stone god who comes
to the rescue of weak peasants
in need of aid. Shone, the
strongest material of the past,
was juxtaposed to technology.
the strength of the future, in the
Shonen comic strip Tetsujin
28Go (Iron-Man No. 28), in April
1956.

According to the comics, the
Tetsujin Twenty-eight was originally
part of a squadron by the

Japanese Secret Weapon Institute, the first 27 models of which were destroyed by U. S. bombers during the Pacific War (WW II). Two professors did not abandon their work with the armistice, and eventually developed Tetsujin No. 28 to help the police fight against crime. Shotaro, son of one of the creators, controlled the giant robot which featured a helmet-covered head, rocket engines on its back, and a gleaming metallic body. His primary foes were powerful criminals, other robots and monsters a prelude to the 80's radioactive [illegible] and, its inventor

disguised as a private-eye, 8-Man could run 1000-times faster than a normal human, had an atomic reactor in his body and could change the facial appearance—including a favorite guise as his arch-enemy's girlfriend.

8-Man became **The Fantastic Eight Man** for American TV and paved the way for a platoon of metamorphic character series like *Ultra-Man*. *Super-Vetter Ultra-7 Kamen Rider Ultraman Leo*, *Shaman* (in **The Evil Brain From Outer Space**), *The Prince of Space* and *G-Force* (**Battle of the Planets**). These were the

most human of the giant heroes often troubled by emotions and roughly analogous to Marvel Comics' android Avenger The Vision. Some of them even were human part of the time or all the time, and were mystically or mechanically modified through implants or special devices.

The Mattel **Shogun Warriors** have capitalized upon the giant robot syndrome as the most visual sci-fi-cons available for their merchandising purposes. In varying degrees of size, mechanical inventiveness and price. All are TV or comic creations from Japan and feature unusually solid metal construction, deadly plastic accouterments, colorfully classy paint jobs, and heroic martial oriental design psychology.

Most Shogunz shoot their fists and fly, but each also has a specialty function for close-in combat. *Mazinga* sprouts wings and shoots daggers. *Combatra* separates his components into tractors, tanks, planes, and has missile fingers. *Dragun* shoots *Ninja* stars from his wrists and hurls daggers. *Raydeen* is a boxman who transmutes mechanically into a sleek bird-like configuration. *Gal-King* turns into a giant skull. *Grand-Iaw* wields a space sword; *Danguard* becomes a massive dreadnaut with a missile head; *Poseidon* shoots corals from his shoulders and *Raider* has a drill-arm and a torpedo launcher with a rotary star-shooter.

The most sincere proof of the **Shogun Warriors** success is the existence of not one but three imitators—all inferior designs of plastic and a begrudging amount of metal flash. Coloring and versatility are not their strong points, but the field appears large enough to absorb **The Starmada, Silver Warriors**, and **The Peace Phantoms**.

The Japanese TV producers have been watching all this activity with interest and testing the American marketplace with live and animated series for several years. The shows, such as **Raydeen**, **Battle of the Planets**, **Space Giants** and **Ultra-Man** have been invariably stunning in color effects, imaginative in plot construction, super-violent in action, and occasionally laughable in rubber suits.

The Japanese output is prodigious however and new series are being offered constantly. The Toei Company is one of the largest exporters, and among the shows currently offered for U.S. distribution are **Fighting General Galaxy**, an animated giant robot battling outerspace invaders from Star Base; **Gaiyalgger**, the story of five action young[illegible] recently awakened from a glacial tomb to stop invaders from the planet Imben with major action in outer-space **Combattler V** (Combatra in the States) is a giant robot designed by a 35,000 year-old computer commanded by a robot named General Garuda, and run by a team of five, each of whom operates a separate machine which interlocks to create the huge Hero—this provides the moral foundation of "working together" a major point in the ad campaign.

There is even a package of 54 live-action half-hours that form an epic sequel to the successful space-opera extravaganza released only six months ago, **Message From Space**. The high point is the film and the series is an elaborate use of stunning special effects, along with wildly eccentric sets, flying space schooners and Druillet-inspired costumes.

There are enough Japanese giant robots in existence right now to satisfy Shogun Warrior lovers for years to come, each loaded with powers, tricks, sidekicks and supporting casts. Amazingly they are all incredibly imaginative and distinctively fascinating, even their names are intriguing, providing one can keep them sorted-out.

But [illegible] the sheer volume of action and gadgetry becomes [illegible] to sympathize with Marvel Comics. They had three issues of their **Shogun Warriors** comic completely written and penciled before someone took notice of the fact that the cast was composed of Raydeen, Mazinga and Dragun. Unfortunately Marvel had only licensed Raydeen, Combatra and Danguard-Ace.

Every offending panel had to be re-drawn—an effort which included not only different costumes, but different power-effects and weapons delivery systems.

The language used to describe that particular tour-up was definitely not Japanese, and could have made a giant robot blush ●

Tom Scheca

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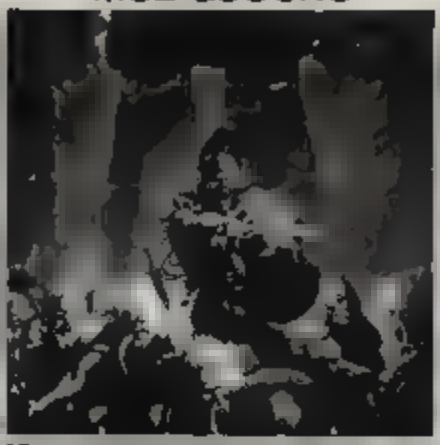
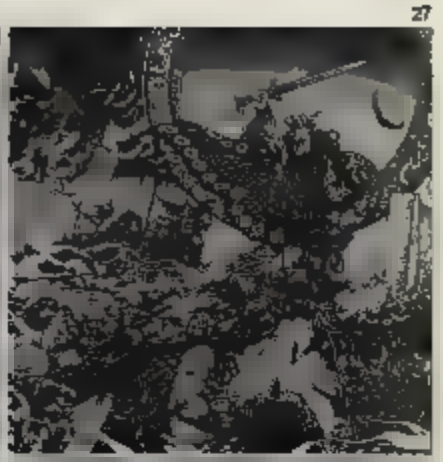

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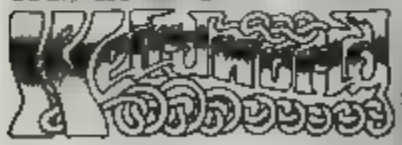

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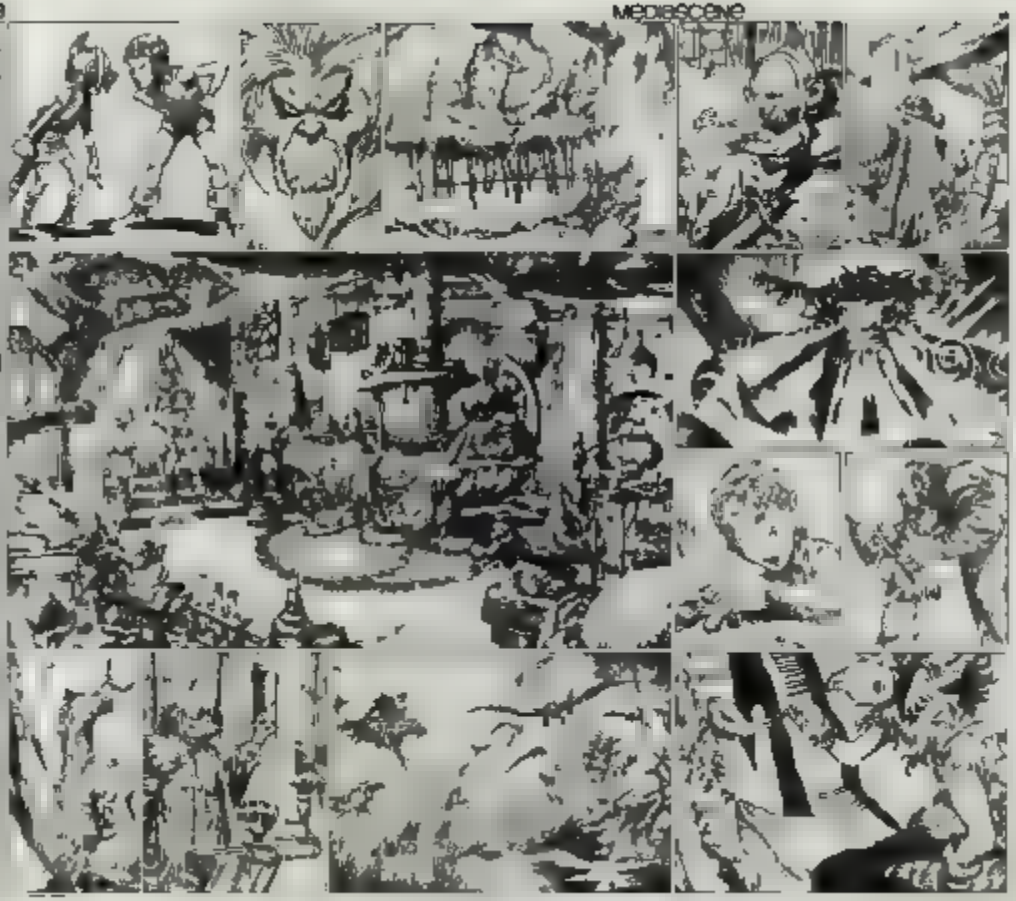

consecutive books and eventually three, to be released during the peak summer sales months of June, July and August. This boosted the total page-count to nearly 96 and Buscema was instructed to develop the epic qualities of the tale by utilizing double-spread panoramas, full-page character groupings, and an expansive method of story-telling.

To make *Weirdworld* even more of a special project bonus items were added to the package. Books One and Three will feature triple-page foldouts. Book Two will contain a simulated parchment map of Weirdworld and all three have 10-15 pages of background material on the creators and characters of the series, plus pull-out centerspread posters.

Weirdworld is best described as Tolkien – Marvel style. Filled with the same elements of magic realism and wondrous escapism. The otherworldly atmosphere is anchored with familiar fantasy icons, yet kept interesting through Moench's quirky characters and Buscema's artistic embellishments.

The obvious Tolkien-esque scenario of *Weirdworld* is both an asset and a liability to the project but Moench firmly denies any overt influences from that source. Actually I think we were both inspired by the same Anglo-Saxon and Germanic fairy-tales. My exposure to Tolkien is limited to reading *The Hobbit* in 1964. It's mostly coincidence that we both employ elves and dwarves, but then neither of us invented them either.

One wonders, however, if a generation raised on high-powered Kirby action and hard space opera can escalate downward to Weirdworld's lower key fairy tale antics, or is the average buyer so fatigued from long underwear burn that he'll give the change of pace a chance simply out of gratitude?

Weirdworld is very complex by comic book standards but I still find that it provides me with the cleanest form of inspiration so far in my career." Moench explains. "The stories just flow out of my head, and I really do love the characters. They're so simple on the surface but that's only because they are innocents abroad in a savage world being forced to grow-up and mature every day through their struggles. I've written or plotted five full comic stories for the upcoming monthly series and both Yelenna and Tyndall become more real and more interesting as the tales progress."

Altogether I'm quite satisfied with the way the books are coming along. Ploog always managed to give me little fantasy kick-bits purely out of his own imagination, and I was a little disappointed to lose him.

"On the other hand, I'm delighted that Buscema was chosen as a replacement particularly because he is putting more work into *Weirdworld* than he has in any book for years. The pencils are just magnificent and he tells me that he finds the subject matter so much fun that he doesn't mind the amount of detail and time he has to put in.

"This is only about the fourth time I've teamed up with John and he likes to work out the story problems more-or-less on his own, so there are occasionally scenes that I envisioned differently but they are equally valid and faithful to my script.

My exposure to Tolkein is limited. It's mostly coincidence that we both employ elves and dwarves.

"I set out to write the very best comic story ever with this *Weirdworld* project and on the whole I'm very satisfied with my own and everyone else's contributions. The idea was to produce a work of quality from cover to cover and must give Marvel credit for coming through with the goods.

"Now they're talking about producing a *Weirdworld* hardback, a trade paperback collection of the stories, the monthly comic and maybe even a regular color magazine like *Rampaging Hulk*. I understand that there's also talk [illegible] of doing an animated TV special and merchandising gimmicks."

"We're really quite proud of the *Weirdworld* package," Rick Marschall sums up. "It all shows just how good comics can be if you work at it. The Jaws 2 magazine was a feat of sorts, dealing with full-color comics that are almost painted. *Weirdworld* is the fruit of many month's labor and hopefully a forerunner of the comics of tomorrow. It shows a high-quality alternative to the 32-page comic book that justifies its $1.50 price tag.

"And on top of all that, it's really a lot of fun for kids and fans alike."

This newest *Weirdworld* adventure is titled "Warriors of the Shadow Realm," and it picks up the story of Tyndall and Yelenna of Rigm, two lost elves with no memory of their past as they continue to pursue their destiny across a danger-filled landscape. For the first time they begin to sense that a higher entity is manipulating their actions, and the very survival of Weirdworld may depend on them.

Curiosity and a sense of purpose impel them to undertake a search for the multi-faceted gemstones, known as the Silver Wraiths, which are guarded by demons trapped within them. The gems are important because when joined together, they allow the elves to foresee their future. Linking the jewels will also create a mystic link with the evil wizard Darklens allowing Yelenna and Tyndall to walk their moments to his lair.

Darklens, especially, is summoning all his powers to keep the elves from succeeding so that he may dominate the enchanted realm. Opposing him and guiding the unknowing heroes is a benevolent wizard, who remains hidden in the shadows throughout most of the story.

Along the way, Tyndall meets a band of savage elves (the first indication that he and Yelenna are not the last of their race) who are distinguished by Mohawk-type haircuts. One of them is named Mud-Butt (a perpetual scrapper and an invaluable loser who spends most of his fighting time sitting down, who offers his services as a guide to the City of Seven Dark Delights, where he promises chaos which will appall their journey in reality Mud-Butt merely wishes to sample a few of the promised delights which leads the trio into a twisting maze of plot-turns and purposeful trouble.

Whether or not Moench will allow his characters to discover their mysterious past or plunge them even into the dark secrets of Weirdworld we won't know until summer when the next quest gets underway – the quest to determine if there really is a market for Weirdworld.

Should the comic book readership decide in their favor predicting an ending to the project won't require a crystal ball. Let's just say that Moench and his crew will live happily ever after. ●

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It's tough being a superhero these days particularly a DC hero like Superman.

Not only must the world's most famous superhero fight the ever-present menace of crazy guilt-ridden TV comics, movies, soapopera and radio shows but he also seems to be a lightning rod for the fury of unappreciative convention-goers. comicfanatics with long-suffering chips on their shoulders. And they are vocal on tracking up the tag "it is glorious epic productions that are often over-sized over-priced and over-rated.

The poor guy just keeps getting picked on from every quarter. If it's not fellow Justice League members like the Flash and Wonder Woman then it pushes the Hulk and Spider-Man. As a consequence Jim Shooter has negotiated a compromise deal for the cooperative production of four tabloid-sized Marvel DC books over a four year period. Each company will take turns overseeing the production of the books with Marvel breaking the ice for a Christmas '79 rematch between Superman and Spider-Man.

Mark Waltman, John Buscema and Joe Sinnott will be the creative team behind this unique affair aiming a competitively high standards for this quarter of super-spectaculars. The villain has been said to be the Penguin and the Parasite is maybe his partner. But a decision regarding the appearance of the Hulk and that book but there are [illegible] concerns.

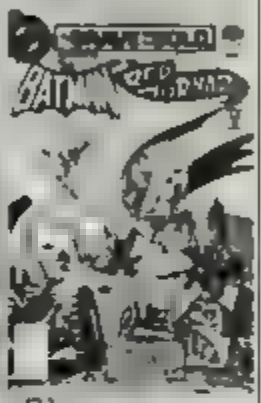
Both Marvel and DC are planning to pay strict attention to the collaborative package deal as each company has approved the other's input so that the characters will remain true to established personalities. They also want to avoid a repeat of the original Superman vs. Spider-Man problem - a spectacular art showcase unbalanced by trying to disguise a [illegible] plot.

Fortunately it's not all hard bargaining between friends and partners for the Man of Steel. Action 500 will feature the epic length 64 page with no ads. The Story of Superman - seen by Jon Sean this celebration of Superman's career was originally intended as a tabloid special edition for last year but the most good intentions was cancelled then demoted to regular comic book status after some minor tinkering with the page count.

Superman will commemorate his fortieth anniversary in Action with the story Let My City Close after which Len Wein will begin a two-part story about a proper known as "M R G X".

Nuclear Radiation Genetic Experimental. Following that on with his hand at short story writing in an issue of Superman containing 20 tales & six page super thriller with Mark Chapter and a seven-page pastiche starring J. Wilbur Wellington resurrected from 1940s obscurity.

Superman is also the star of the first of DC's new line of digest size comics headlining The Best of DC collection in issue one. Other digests are to appear each bi monthly regularly occasionally augmented by summer and Christmas special additions to the line. Jonah Hex Western Tales is one of the titles and The Best of DC might eventually encompass Batman Super Friends and Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer all in color priced at 95-cents.



Marvel and DC will be releasing their first joint publishing venture in 1980 when they produce a four-issue tabloid-sized comic book featuring the characters from both companies.

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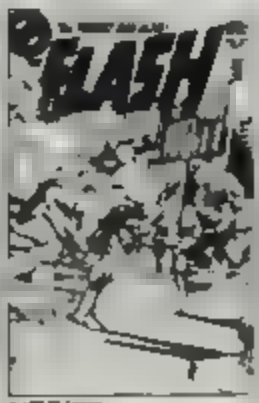
the cloned reincarnation of the 1940's Captain Marvel. Even a non-super hero like Shazam! An has gotten his licks in on the Man of Steel and whupped him to a bloody pulp.

But when Marvel Comics enters the brawl by sending over their mightiest teen-age Spider-Man to take on DC's 50 year old Superman the whole ball game has come to down the ring. Fortunately the fans is being drawn in an all-out fight to the finish and the message nothing through is loud and clear - to hell with trophy and personal vendetta again.

Both Marvel and DC are long known the service of [illegible] but when they combine their super-resources the sheer [illegible]



Kahuta to front DC sf venture

Three new books at DC including a straight science-fiction anthology package titled Time Warp which will star for a one-off and regular feature covers by Mike Kaluta. All Out War is being planned as the dollar-sized companion to it. Combat DC's big money maker which is a horror with a war character created by Bob Kanigher and called The Viking Commando. He carries a battle-axe and wears handpowers

COMIXSCENE

of machine-gun ammo with an M-1 slung over his shoulder. The character was almost titled *The Viking From Hell* but it didn't sound very "D Kubert will, of course, provide the covers.

World's Finest has been demoted to 40-cent status, primarily because the Superman-Batman team-up stood better alone and only suffered by being encumbered with a dollar price-tag and all the other characters cluttering up the book. A new title has been started to absorb the Wonder Woman, Green Arrow-Black Lightning and Shazam series, adding Plastic Man to the roster and emerging as the new **Five Star Super Spectacular**. Wein and Joe Staton will be handling the new Plastic Man series which will get off to a rousing start by simply ignoring the many DC efforts to resurrect the hero in the past 25 years, and drawing upon the flavor of the original Jack Cole stories for inspiration, villains, plots, etc.

Superman Family was also considered for a dissembling similar to **World's Finest's** with the object of reviving the old-fashioned family line of Lois Lane, Jimmy Olsen and Supergirl titles. But upon reconsideration nobody was really willing to admit that they worked on a book titled Lois Lane every month - and Superman Family is a more prestigious banner to serve under thanks to the film's spectacular success.

Superboy has been promoted to his own series, leaving the **Legion of Super-Heroes** to fend for itself. The new Superboy title is replacing the planned **Swamp Thing** revival on the schedule for the very simple reason that Len Wein prefers not to return to that strip, unless of course, Joe Kubert were to illustrate it). Marty Pasko has no time in his schedule to write it and no other writer is motivated enough to give the series the extra work it demands.

Wein will be working with Kubert however in an oblique way on the **Batman** title. Joe has agreed to do a number of covers for the series, several of which Len will write stories around, such as an intriguing robot scientist concept along with his usual superbowl of villainous supercriminals, including The Firebug in September, the return of The Gentleman Ghost for Halloween and The Joker for Thanksgiving.

Just when you think you've seen everything, the comics business manages to come up with quixotic twists that defy all known logic and occasionally make good financial sense. DC has arranged with Simon & Shuster to put out three large 256-page reprint volumes focusing on material they either no longer publish or seem ashamed to admit they do.

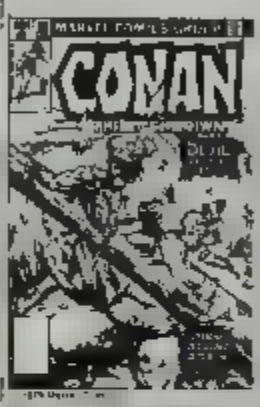
The Best of DC War has the potential to be a really magnificent Kubert and Haath show case and indeed represents the true backbone of DC's sales these days - only nobody talks about the war books as anything other than "the rest of the line." The selection of Mike Jaksa to write the introduction is curious, however, because it pointedly overlooks Bob Kanigher who only scripted damn near every story in the book.

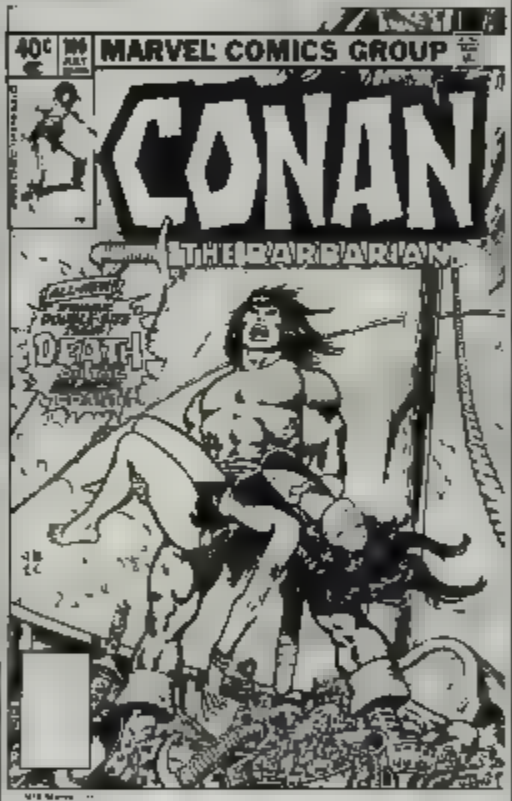
The Best of DC Science Fiction is a subject no longer even published there. Although their SF line is primarily beholden to Gardner Fox and John Broome the volume is introduced again by Julian.

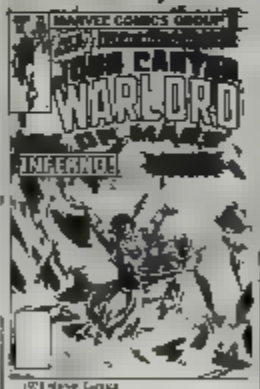
These books represent some of DC's finest efforts in comics, but it is somehow unsettling to see a company so apathetic towards the workhorse professionalism and prolific craftsmanship of veteran creators like Kanigher, Fox and Broome when the current generations main claim to fame is a handful of books illustrated by Neal Adams.

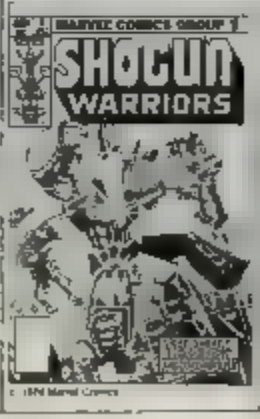
Things apparently haven't changed for the better since Infantino was fired either. Vinnie Colletta is no longer the art director so that artists must again deal with the company on a personal level rather than in a professional business status. High quantity production of middle quality material is on the rise again. Jenette Kahn has all but disappeared as a refurbished figurehead, and the personal public relations goodwill generated by Mike Gold has given way to brief promotional handouts put together as a sideline by the office staff. But then it's always rough being number two.

At Marvel there appears to be a concentrated effort to crash the high-priced comic magazine market in a big way with an eye towards the day when the 32-page comic will no longer be a feasible product. Marvel's top artists are being recruited to insure the best possible start for these titles and outside talent is being solicited to broaden the marketing potential of several projects.









news/views/reviews from the world of comics

The biggest gun in Marvel's summer arsenal is **Epic Illustrated** (formerly **Nova** and **Odyssey**), which will be an anthology package very much like **Heavy Metal**, but with less esoteric writing. Jim Starlin has been contracted to do an eight-part series of stories based on Egyptian mythology, Craig Russell has proposed a series of vignettes illustrating heroic scenes from classic operas, Rich Corben will be represented with a story never published in America before, the Brothers Hildebrandt will preview their novel, **Unalaska**, and Stan and John Buscema will do the Silver Surfer. Marvel is only buying first publication and anthology rights for the stories in **Epic Illustrated**, with overseas profits to be split with the creators.

Marvel Super Special is the other experimental color magazine, concentrating on book-length graphic novels in particular. Issues 11, 12 and 13 will contain the sprawling, 100-page epic of *Wanderers*. Super Special 14 will adapt the film **Nosferatu**, written by Ralph Macchio and illustrated by Gene Colan. Issue 15 is scheduled to contain *The Rolling Stones*, presented by Doug Moench and Colan.

Moench is receiving quite a number of choice assignments these days, as well as the collaboration of Marvel's top artists. "I seem to be enjoying a period of unexplainably creative inspiration and good writing," he explains. "I'm producing a lot of material that is being appreciated and promoted into the color magazine line."

Within a very short space of time, Doug will be headlining all three of Marvel's color books, starting with *Wanderers*, his regular **Rampaging Hulk** commitment, and a 50-page **Moonknight** story in **Marvel Premiere** 30.

Doug is also quite happy with the direction that the **KungFu** book is taking lately, admitting a lengthily decline in the past due to too many fill-ins, reprints, and the unmatured art of Mike Zeck, all of which has since improved greatly. Moench plans to increase the tempo of the series to the speed it was when Gulacy handled the art, in addition to bringing back FuManchu for another shot at Shang-Chi.

In the **Dragon Warriors** title, Doug revealed that he has finally figured out how to handle it successfully. "There are just too many components involved in the series to fit comfortably into a 17-page book. Every robot has a handful of powers, a bunch of operators, good and bad monsters and supporting casts—it took me five issues to figure out who did what. Now I'm going to concentrate primarily on one robot at a time, bringing them together for the finish of a sequence every four or five issues."

One of Doug's old series, **Godzilla**, was cancelled before its final story could be printed, penciled and inked by Steve Ditko. Rather than investigate the job however, Marv Wolfman has re-written it from a giant monster tale into a mystery-horror story for **Marvel Premiere**. Ditko made some minor changes in the artwork while inking, and the famous movie monster will now appear under a new name—Wani, the Serpent of the God of the Sea. The Wani is based on an ancient mythological Japanese legend, so only the name has been changed to protect the company from lawsuits.

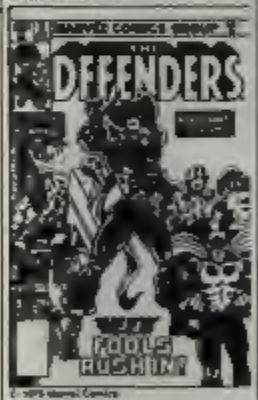
Ditko is also working with Wolfman regularly on the revived **Machine Man** title, which will be scheduled soon to hit the summer sales peak. Three issues have been completed so far, and Wolfman would like to get five or six ahead, in anticipation of the time he will lose when the summer comic convention tour picks up in July and August.

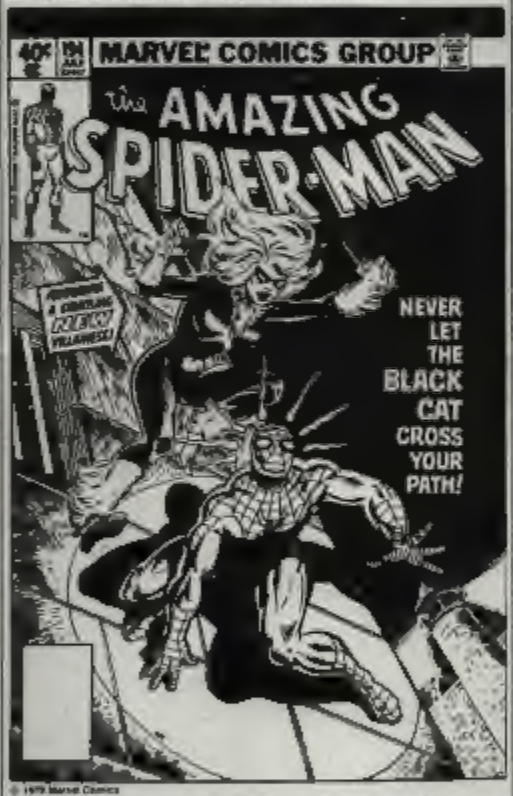
Ditko cranks up Marvel machinery

To this end, Marv is pushing steadily ahead on all his books, so that the **Fantastic Four** is planned well into the fall schedule. Issue 210 will see the return of Galactus, and 211 will introduce a new herald for the planet devouring space giant. Issues 212 and 213 will tie up the still dangling Nova storyline, and Wolfman plans on two-part stories thereafter—"17 pages are simply not enough to tell a full-bodied story."

Spider-Man is similarly booked in advance, with issue 197 starring the Kingpin on his last caper—his wife has ordered him to quit crime or she will divorce him. Then, Mysterio returns for a two-issue outing, followed by number 200's double-sized jaunt against the Burglar, with a one-page cameo writing appearance by Stan.

Next issue, **MEDIASCENE** will preview Marvel's **Epic Illustrated** in detail, along with the latest offering of film adaptations.





THE SORCERERS HILDEBRANDT

Most artists invest their palettes with a rainbow of hues that come in small metal tubes, but not the Brothers Hildebrandt. Their works are painted in the colors of wonder, enchantment, illusion and joy—and glazed with spectral layers of dreams and nightmares.

Obviously, they know something about magic that we don't, and manage to incorporate it into their opulent visions and visions of the fantastic as easily as the Sorcer's Apprentice created a cosmic symphony in **Fantasia**.

Since an auspicious debut in 1976 with the publication of their Tolkein calendar, Greg and Tim Hildebrandt have cast a diabolic spell on all those whose imaginations span the distance from here to Middle-earth and beyond. Several calendars, an illustrated novel and a handful of paperback covers later, they have emerged as the unassailable twin princes of fairy-tale fantasy illustration. How else could they produce work in shifts, one painting while the other sleeps, without even the *slightest* hint of where one stopped and the other began?

The Brothers Hildebrandt discovered their ESP powers during a jaunt in the service, and consider dreaming the same dreams simultaneously a common occurance.

They were born (as the story goes) some thirty-nine years ago in Detroit, and grew up under the influence of comic books, science fiction and movies. Their time was divided between drawing, making puppets and animated home movies. Things haven't changed much since then, at least in that respect, because they're still at it today—only now their talents are in so much demand they should have been triplets.

To celebrate their achievements, and our discovery of them, Ballantine Books has just published a book devoted exclusively to their work. **The Art of the Brothers Hildebrandt**. Looking through dozens of full-color and black and white reproductions, one is immediately struck by the remarkable virtuosity of their work, their complete control over the viewer's eye through the careful, calculated use of composition, color and the choice of elements. They also have the uncanny ability to create a reality indigenous to the work itself—even though the style and technique of painting is N. C. Wyeth out of Carl Barks. It is also crystal clear that each illustration has been conjured with equal amounts of love and enthusiasm, completely devoid of the super-slick qualities we've come to expect from commercial art over the years.

Former Ballantine art director, Ian Summers, provides a lively running text with ample biographical data on the Brothers, and a first-person account of how they happened to apply for the job of illustrating one of the best-selling calendar series in history: "Pictures, man, we make 'em—Tolkein pictures!"

But the real wealth of the book is in the art itself, some culled from their most famous works, others that have never been published before, and a few painted by the artists separately.

One session with this book could convince you that the word Hildebrandt might just replace the word Abracadabra. ●

© 1979 Tim and Greg Hildebrandt

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- ☐ Vol. 2—paperbound — $8.95 plus .75 postage
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- ☐ Star Fighters 1 — $1.25 plus .50 postage
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There's no other way to describe this exquisite, new portfolio by Alfredo Alcala. Voltar features six staggeringly detailed plates of demons, dragons and dangerous women warriors—all surrounded by fantastic epic vistas so lush in texture they rival the timeless steel engravings of Gustave Dore. Alcala has used his magic pen to create a series of enchanted tapestries woven with lines and images inspired by the eternal fabric of myth and legend. Limited to an edition of 1000, signed and numbered by the artist. $10.

VOLTAR BY ALFREDO ALCALA

BEYOND HEAVEN AND HELL

Six remarkable plates of horror and wonder, of warriors and wizards. John Pound takes us into the darkest recesses of the imagination in a big, new portfolio (12x15"). Here is high fantasy *in the tradition of Hannes Bok and Edd Cartier* with a pinch of Frazetta.

THE DARK SUNS OF GRUAGA

This exciting portfolio is the wildest Nino yet. *Ten exquisite plates* tell a narrative tale of the conflict between gods and mortals—and the woman that became their pawn. Beasts, battles and barbaric sword and sorcery action. A signed, numbered limited edition of 1000. $15.

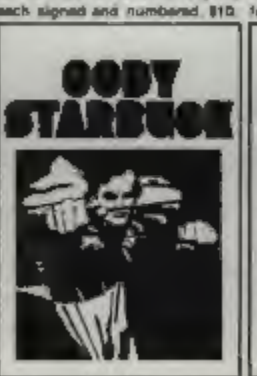
FOUR MORE FANTASY PORTFOLIOS

Robin Hood, like the other portfolios shown here, is a high quality production on heavy paper, professionally packaged for the serious art collector. In this assemblage of six 11x15" black and white plates, Howard Chaykin brings to life the legendary bandit of Sherwood Forest. 1000 signed copies. $10.

Frank Thorne's Wizards and Warrior Women features six sensational scenes in a protective illustrated folder. Busty amazons, unearthly beasties and dark-robed sorcerers make every plate a tapestry of visual enchantment and fighting female fantasy in the tradition of Red Sonja. Signed edition of 1000. $10.

Cody Starbuck is a brand-new collection of six plates that capture the wild galactic action of Howard Chaykin's startlest space adventurer. The reproductions come in a specially illustrated folder and a protective envelope. The portfolio was run in an edition of 1000 copies, each signed and numbered. $10.

Land of Shadows is an impressive full-color showcase of Tolkien-esque spectacle, sword-play and sorcery, by Frank Cirocco. Hobbits, dragons and legions of orcs parade through the six giant 12½x18½" plates, custom packaged in a protective, illustrated signed folder. A must for Middle-earth fans. $20.



DREAM-QUEST OF UNKNOWN KADATH

For the first time, H.P. Lovecraft's masterpiece of horror has been combined with one of the most imaginative talents in the world of comic illustration. Tom Sutton journeys into the most nightmarish world ever created in six stunning plates in a special folder and envelope. A limited edition of 1000. $10.